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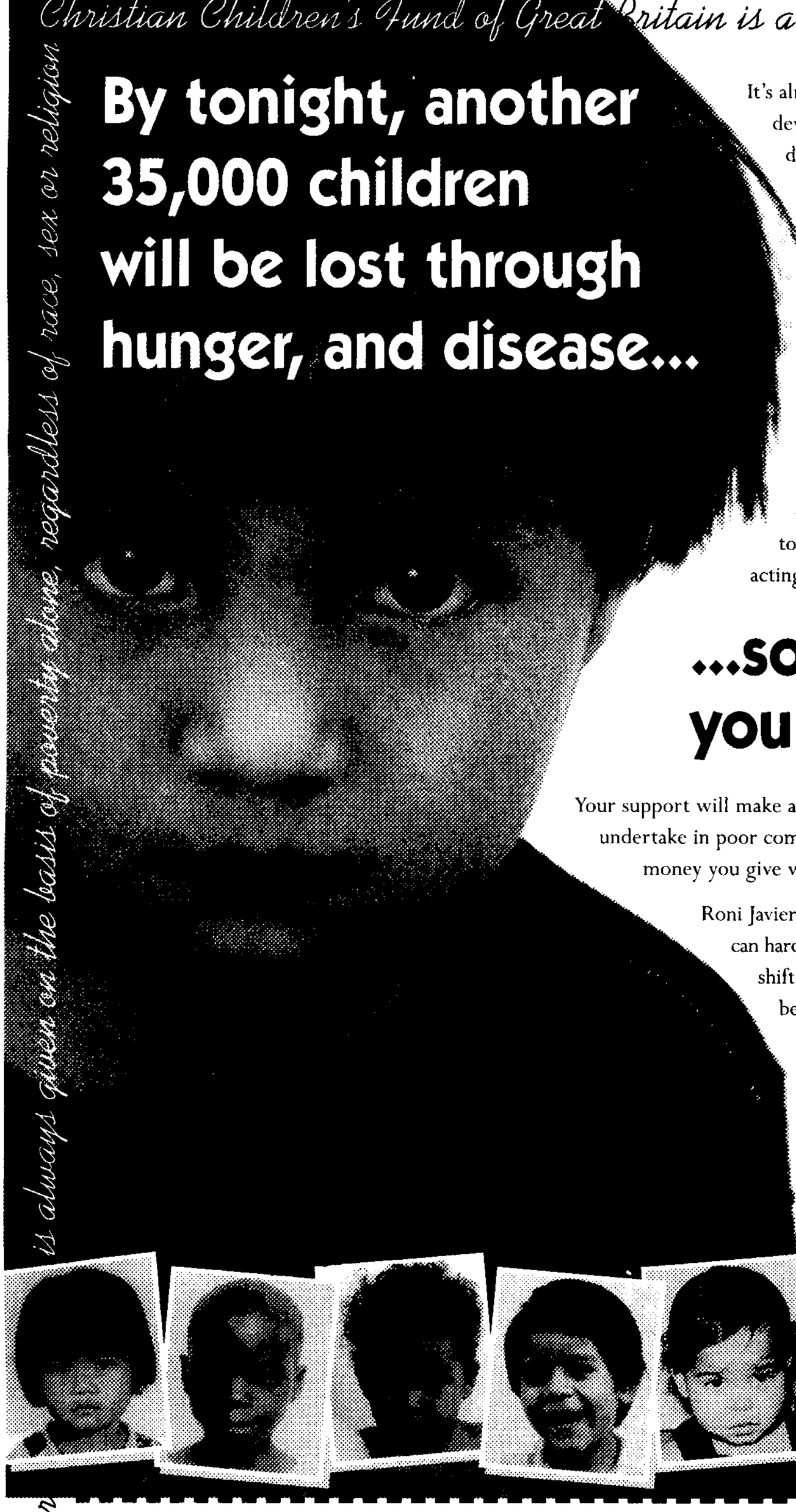
Christian Children's Fund of Great Britain is a humanitarian, non-denominational registered charity working with locally owned, long-term projects throughout the developing world and Eastern Europe to help bring healthcare, education and eventual self-sufficiency to children and communities in need. Support is always given on the basis of poverty alone, regardless of race, sex or religion

By tonight, another 35,000 children will be lost through hunger, and disease...



It's almost unbelievable, yet every day 35,000 children in developing countries die from malnutrition and preventable diseases. That's more than 24 every minute!

The cause for most of this terrible suffering is poverty. Without enough food, clothing and medical care, let alone a proper education, the future for a child born in poverty is often tragically short. Many die from hunger and disease. Millions more face a daily struggle simply to survive.

Yet all it takes is £15 a month to sponsor a child, bringing real hope into their life and giving both them and their community the chance of a decent future.

It may seem insignificant to sponsor just one of so many desperately needy children, but by doing so you will join together with the many thousands of other like-minded people acting as sponsors through Christian Children's Fund.

...so why do we ask you to help just one?

Your support will make a priceless contribution towards the vital work that we undertake in poor communities around the world. We guarantee that 80% of the money you give will go directly to help a child and their community.

Roni Javier pictured here, lives with his mother in the Honduras, in what can hardly be called a house. It has a straw roof, a dirt floor and a make-shift hearth for cooking. There is no sanitation and Roni has often been ill and undernourished. Now Roni has a sponsor we are able to work constantly to see to his health and development. The more sponsors we can find, the more children like Roni can be helped to a safer and brighter future.

Somewhere, this very minute a child is waiting to be sponsored by you. Please don't delay - you will make a huge difference to more than just one life.

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Yes, I would like to sponsor a child

P.E. 72

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Please send my information pack today ☐

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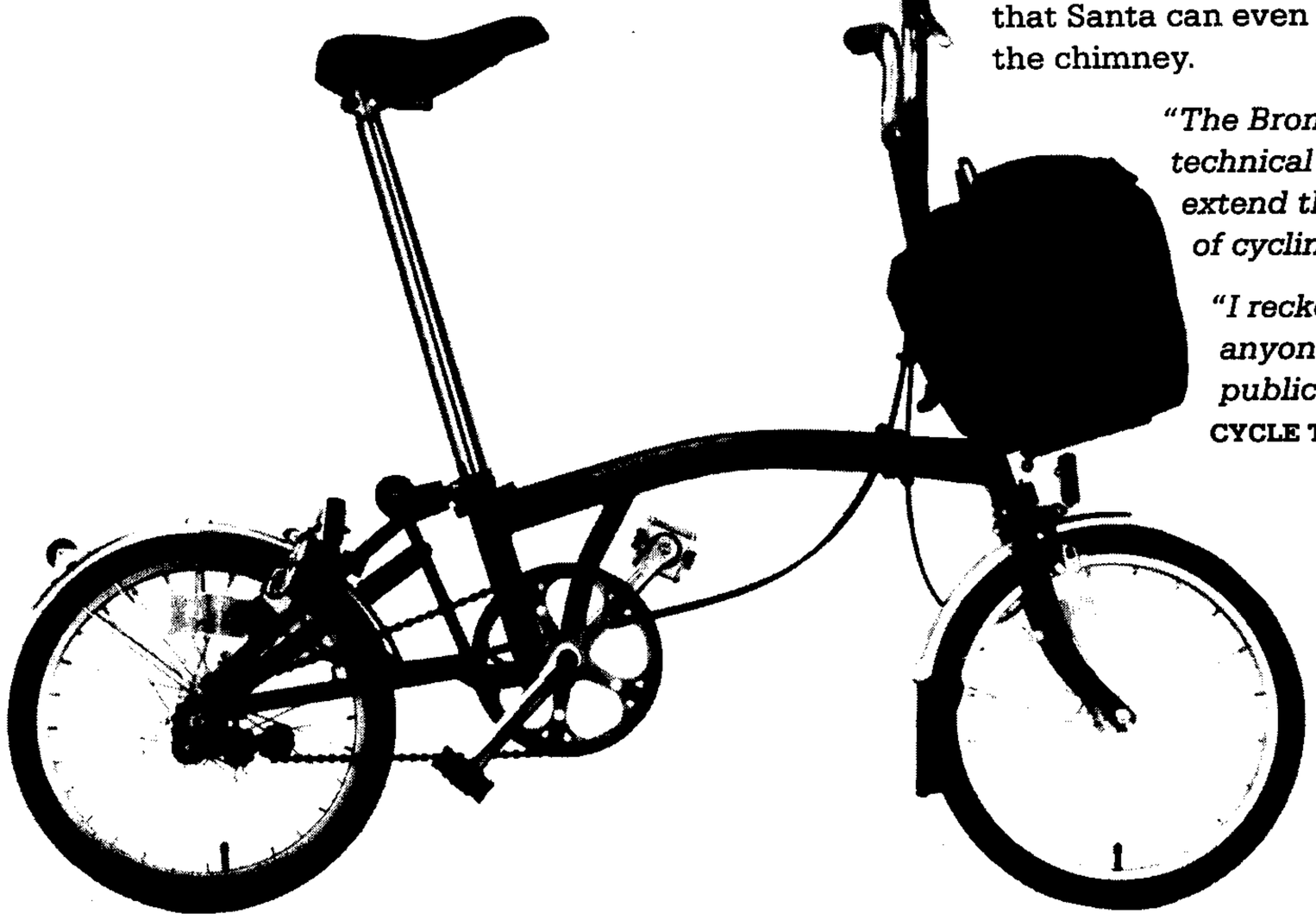

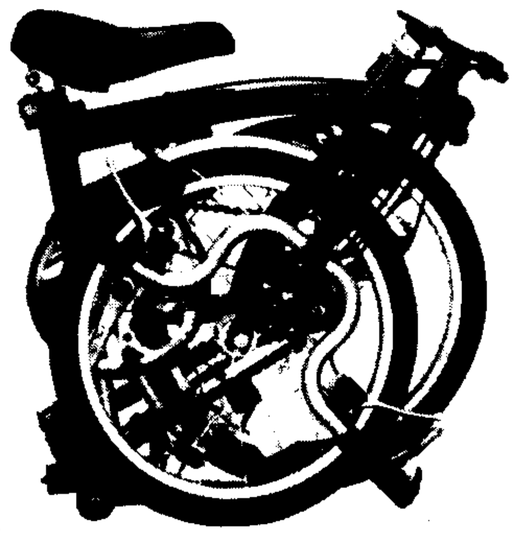

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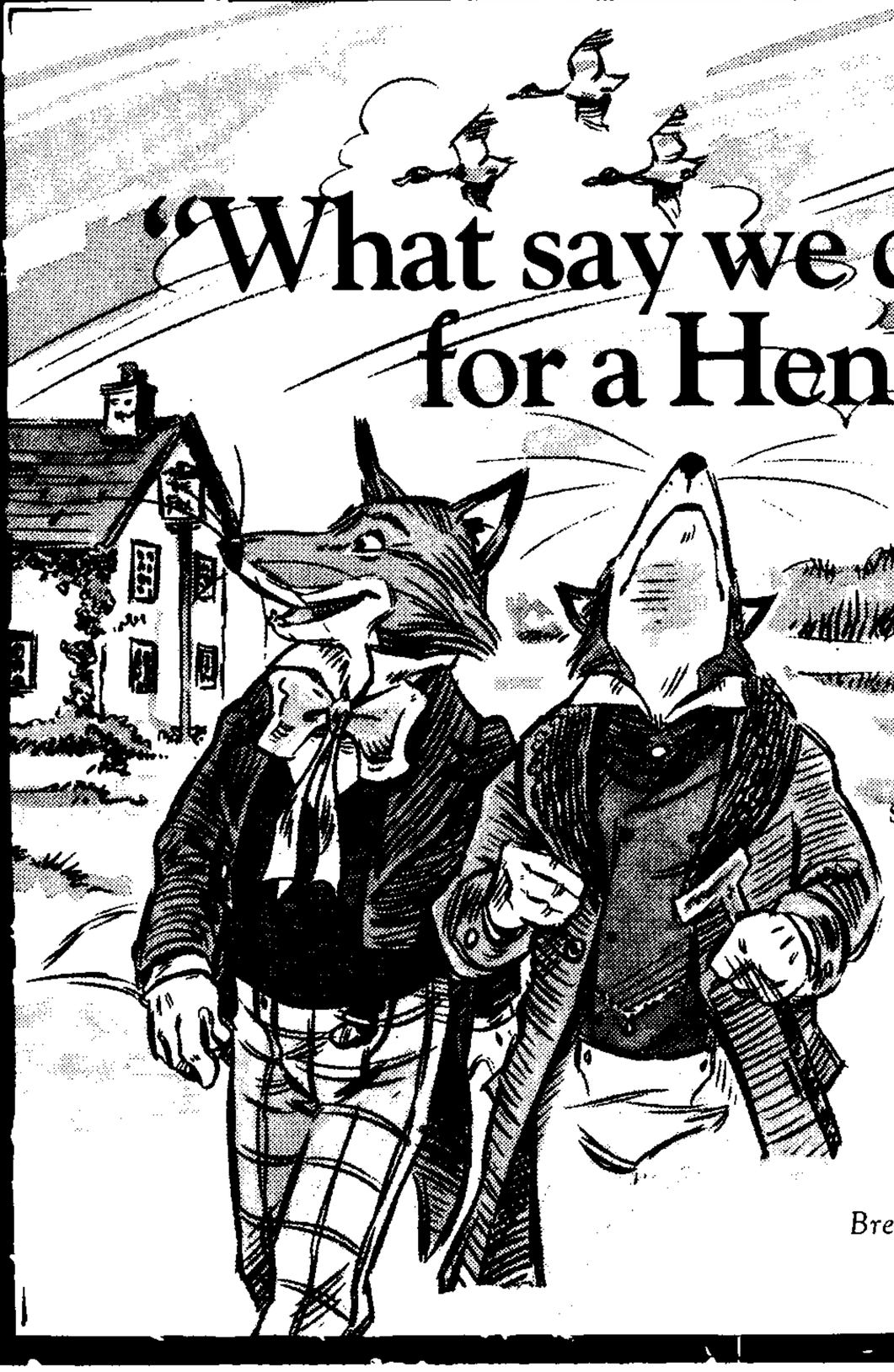

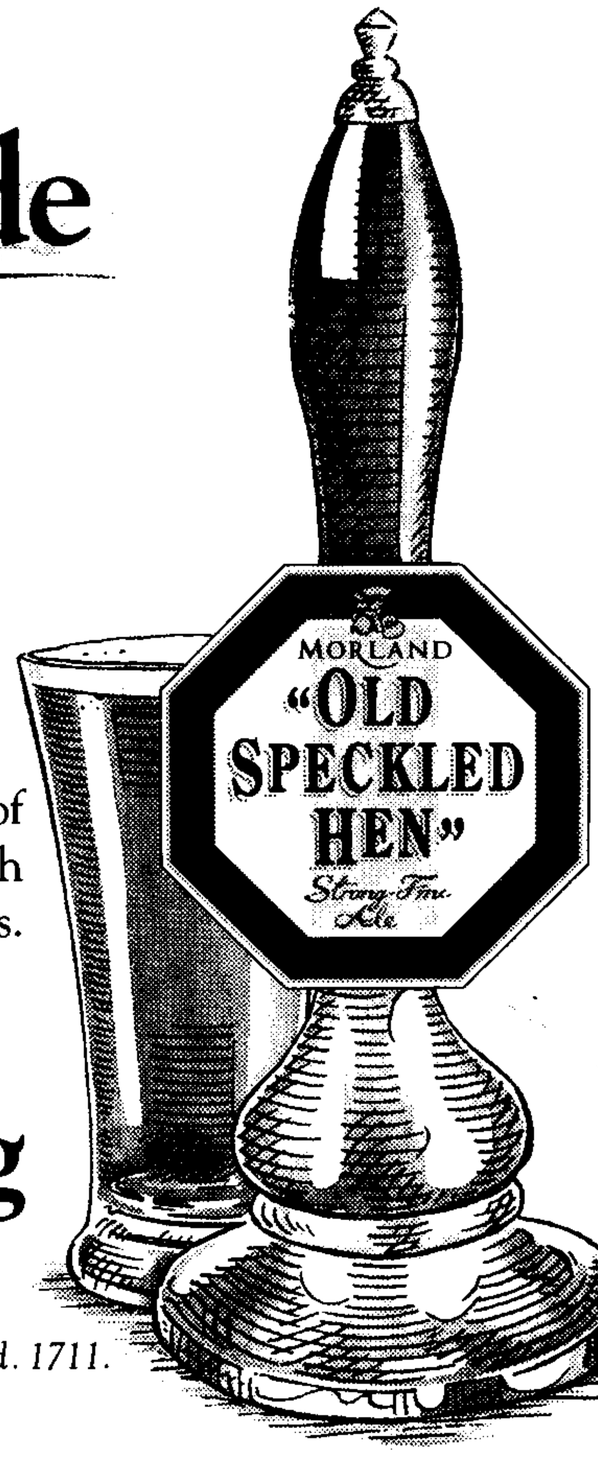

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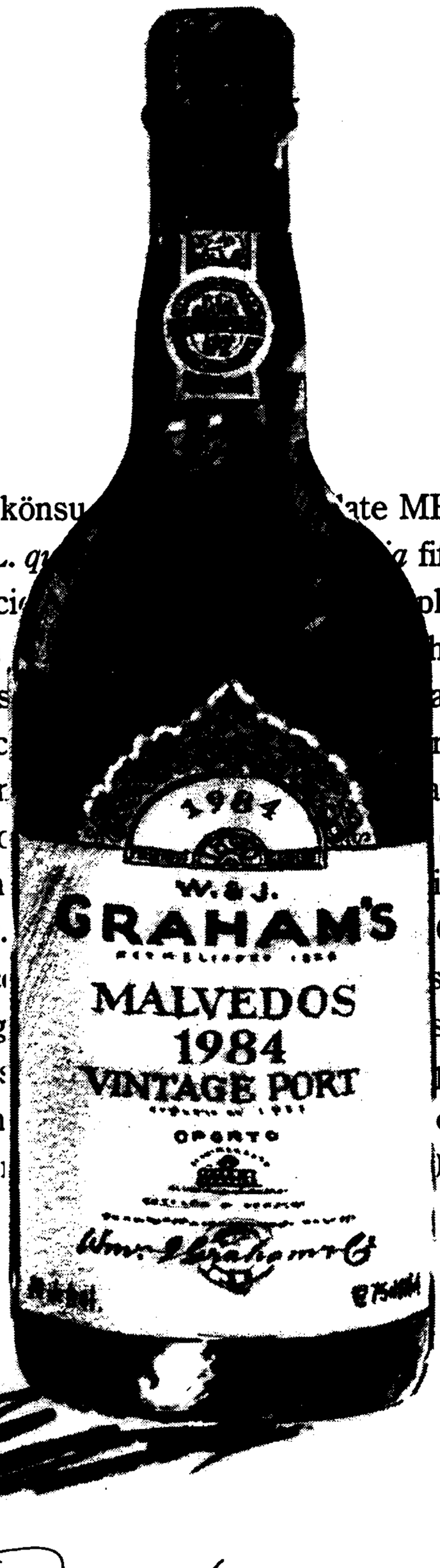

Consummate (könsu…ate ME. [- Fr. *quintessence*, *†quinte essence* - med.L. *q*…*a* fifth essence.] **1.** The 'fifth essence' of anci…phy, supposed to be the substance of which …heavenly bodies were composed. **2.** The mos…art of any substance; a highly refined essenc…n older chemistry, an alcoholic tincture obtair…t 1576. **b.** The purest or most perfect form c… quality 1570. **c.** The most perfect embodim…ies of a certain class of persons, etc. 1590. …Consummate; of the highest perfection or c…ss. **e.** Impeccable; not liable to sin; (of thing…ss. **f.** Sublime; exalted surpassing, so impress…pire awe or wonder. **Quintessence** *n.* Th… est or most perfect form or manifestatio…). **Quintesse-ntial** *a.*

The Quintessential Port.

Gnome

IT has come to a pretty pass when a minister of the crown travels to a foreign country and refuses to carry out the most basic of ministerial duties, ie to secure contracts for British companies.

Ms Clare Short has shocked the entire business community by announcing that during her long visit to China she did not once mention to her hosts the importance of buying Gnome Digital Microwave Toasters, as I had specifically asked her to do.

Instead, Ms Short made feeble remarks about human rights thereby ignoring the most fundamental of human rights, ie the right of businessmen to sell microwave toasters to unsuspecting Chinese people.

What is the point of giving aid to these people if they do not spend the money buying British goods, such as the Gnome Digital Microwave Toaster?

E. Strobes
pp. Lord Gnome
The Sino-British Friendship Centre
Tiananmen Square
Beijing.

Product Recall

The Gnome Corporation are withdrawing the Gnome Digital Microwave Toaster™ following a number of minor malfunctions resulting in the burning of a small number of pieces of toast and several homes. Anyone who purchased the above product with serial number prefix CRAP 2174/36 should call the fire brigade immediately.

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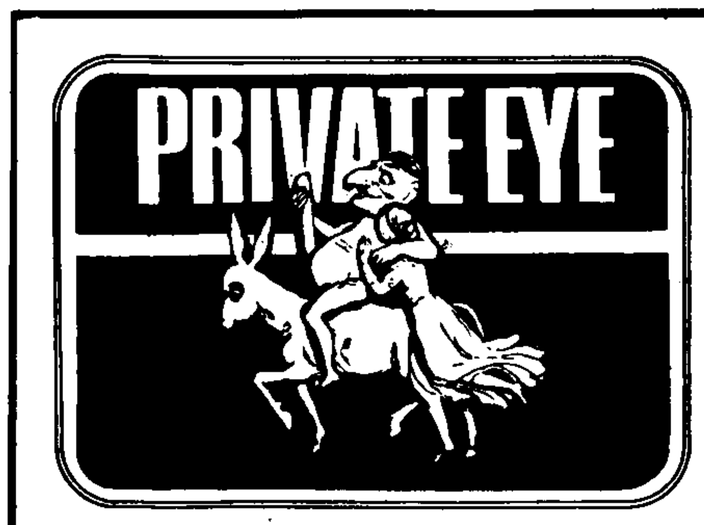


COLOUR SECTION

NERVOUS Tories are bracing themselves for Labour retaliation following William Hague's taunting innuendo about "Lord Mandelson of Rio".

As they point out, it was a rather surprising jibe coming from a man who has himself been the object of "gay smear" stories and whose entourage includes a large number of confirmed bachelors. Hague's chief lieutenant, Alan Duncan MP, remains unmarried at the age of 41 and is known affectionately as "Dipstick" — presumably because of his background in the oil business.

A DINNER to revive the failing fortunes of the Holborn and St Pancras Conservative Association was thrown last month at the In and Out Club in Piccadilly.

Given the £40 price of a ticket, the speaker (Alan Clark MP) and the compulsory black ties, the turnout of 84 was regarded as excellent. After the meal the president rose to toast "Her Majesty the Queen".

The company rose, muttered "The Queen" and drunk loyally. Then another official rose and proposed a toast "To General Pinochet". All 84 sprang to their feet and shouted out the unexpected toast much more gleefully, drank and gave a special cheer.

● *More on Hague's howlers 10*

THE eruption of student protest against tuition fees at Balliol College, Oxford, leaves the college's acting head Andrew Graham in a terrible quandary.

Having long posed as a bit of a radical, Graham might be expected to side with his students. But his guilty secret is that he has spent much of his career brown-nosing the Labour party. He was the economic adviser who urged devaluation on John Smith — immediately leaked, to great embarrassment — and devised the election-losing Alternative Budget in 1992.

Dropped by Gordon Brown, Graham has been hoping to use his old friend Gavyn Davies, one of Gordon's cronies, to scramble back into Labour's good books — a campaign that may now be sabotaged by Balliol's resistance to tuition fees. Torn between his loyalty to his undergraduates and his political ambitions, what on earth is the poor chap to do?

NEWS that Richard Burge, former head of the Zoological Society of London, has abandoned his desire to conserve animals in favour of hunting and shooting them as chief executive of the Countryside Alliance came as something of a surprise to colleagues at London Zoo.

Throughout his tenure Burge had often apparently told them of his ultimate desire to become a Labour MP. As one former colleague remarked this week: "There aren't many more rightwing organisations in Britain than the Countryside Alliance — but I suppose he's moving in the right direction."

● *More on Blair's band 10*

MARTIN TAYLOR's departure as chief executive of Barclays bank was accompanied by handsome profiles of the "brilliant" banker.

In the *Daily Telegraph* readers were reminded that Taylor "loves a challenge" — a point apparently proven by his academic career: "An old Etonian, he studied oriental languages at Balliol College, Oxford, because it was `difficult to do'. He got a first."

A quick call to Oxford university's records office confirms details of a Martin Taylor who read oriental studies and graduated in 1974 with a *second* class degree. Now that Taylor has more time on his hands he will, of course, write to the newspapers and correct this upgrading of his degree result, won't he?

● *More on the Barclays Banker 30*

MOHAMED FAYED's latest brilliant wheeze is to buy London's Playhouse theatre and rename it after Princess Diana.

The Playhouse would be a fine addition to Fayed's portfolio of cultural treasures — *Punch* magazine, Liberty Radio and Fulham FC. There is, however, one small problem: for the past few weeks the theatre has been staging a one-man show by the comedian Jackie Mason. In view of Fayed's reported comments on "the Jews", Mason may wish to take his act elsewhere in future.

Still, Fayed will be following in distinguished footsteps. Jeffrey Archer bought a 60 percent stake in the Playhouse in 1988 — but then sold out four years later. According to Michael Crick's biography of Archer, the great storyteller lost about £1.5m on the venture.

IT'S a small world, all right — and getting smaller at Radio 4's *The World Tonight*, which has just been given its new budget for foreign stories: precisely 0p.

Already dubbed *The Wires Tonight* for its total reliance on agency copy, even more airtime will now be devoted to cheap discussion of events by studio guests in London.

● *More Media News 12*

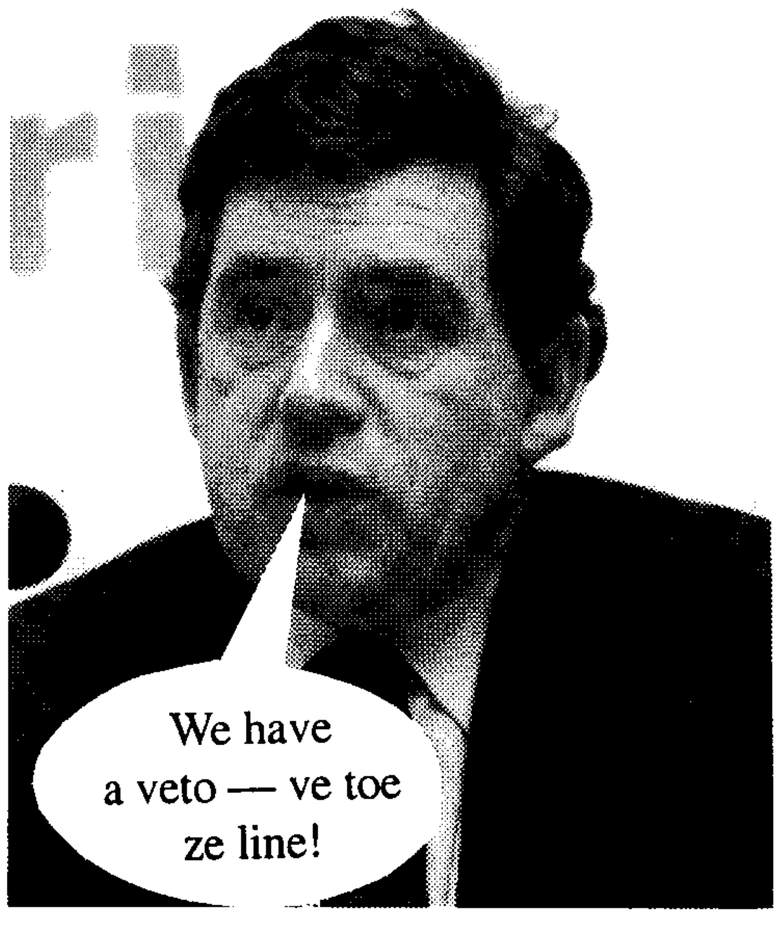
A TOP PR firm was needed to tell the public why the government is building the Birmingham northern relief road — which Frank Dobson, as shadow transport secretary five years ago, promised Labour would not build: a pledge which remained up to and beyond the 1997 election.

The lucky firm is Ludgate Communications; and most of the work promoting the road will be done by Ludgate's expert hype merchant, Richard Elsen.

Elsen was righthand man to Peter Mandelson in the latter's "rebuttal unit" at Millbank during the election. He specialised in "political intelligence" — ie exposing the breaking of Tory promises. Ludgate was also involved in promoting Cock High Tex, the company responsible for the not very flattering or successful first roof on Mandelson's pet project, the millennium dome.

● *More Hype 13*

BROWN'S MESSAGE TO GERMANY



Street Of Shame

"IN MORE ways than one, the law lords' opinions in the Pinochet case are a deep embarrassment to politicians," Hugo Young observed in the *Guardian* on 26 November. But they also came as a severe embarrassment to Young's own newspaper.

On 20 October, shortly before the high court considered the Pinochet case, a *Grauniad* editorial loftily declared that "these choices belong above all to Chileans, the people who suffered under Pinochet and who are best qualified to decide what price he should be made to pay" — thus echoing the previous day's *Daily Mail*, and surprising the massed ranks of *Guardian* readers who wanted to see Pinochet extradited.

On 29 October, after Lord Bingham's pro-release ruling, the *Grauniad* breathed a sigh of relief. "Go home, Augusto, and never return to this country of moderation which you do not deserve." But wait: wasn't there a chance that the House of Lords might overrule the high court? Apparently not: "It is true that the general remains under arrest while an appeal goes forward to the House of Lords, but given the unanimity of the high court judges it is unlikely that their view will be overturned."

Whoops! When the law lords found against Pinochet after all, the *Guardian* suddenly dropped its "go home Augusto" line and announced that extradition was an excellent idea. "The government has consistently said it would let the law take its course," it declared on 26 November. "The law has taken its course. The government should not change its mind now."

Unlike the *Grauniad*. In an editorial four days later it advised Jack Straw to ignore "persiflage about letting the courts have their sway" — or, if you prefer, about letting the law take its course. "Extradition is political business," it explained, and Straw must do nothing to feed "a blood lust on the part of former left wingers whose gods failed but whose appetite for Jacobin procedure is unabated".

So he should let Pinochet go? Er, no. Changing its mind yet again, this time in mid-editorial, the *Grauniad* concluded that Straw should make the world "a more just place" by upholding the lords' ruling. "This," it added, "is a belief to separate the sheep and the goats."

Except, presumably, for those sheep and goats that prefer to sit on the electric fence.

MATTHEW SWEET, film critic of the *Independent on Sunday*, was abruptly relived of his duties two weeks ago when deputy editor Rebecca Nicolson decided the paper needed a "celebrity name". The megastar she had in mind was *Zeitgeist*-expert Gilbert Adair (*Who he? Ed.*)

While Adair negotiated his salary, a piece written by him was sitting on the arts desk of the daily *Indie*, ready to be published. But as soon as he'd agreed to take the job he hastily rang the *Indie* and demanded that the article be spiked. Could this by any chance be related to the fact that its title was *Why I Will Never Watch Another Movie After the Millennium*?

UNDER the headline *Union in £6m Storm*, the *News of the Screws* revealed on 8 November that GMB general secretary John Edmonds was to be investigated by his own officials for allegedly removing millions of pounds from the pension fund and using it as a bridging loan to prop up a failed property deal.

The use of pension money was perfectly legal at the time it was done in 1990, but would be banned under current legislation," the paper noted.

Edmonds was incandescent and sent an urgent email to all GMB staff the following morning: "An outrageous article appeared in yesterday's *News of the World*, accusing me of misusing the union's pension funds... The article is a pack of lies. Immediate legal action is being instituted. Writs against the *News of the World* will be issued today."

More than a month later, no writ has been served.

THE newspaper that brought us the Hitler diaries and the bogus revelation that Michael Foot was a "KGB agent" had another sensational scoop last month. According to a front-page splash in the *Sunday Times*, "Israel is working on a biological weapon that would harm Arabs but not Jews".

Citing "Israeli military and western intelligence sources", the paper revealed that scientists at Nes Tziona, Israel's biological institute, were developing an "ethno-bomb" that would "exploit medical advances by identifying distinctive genes carried by some Arabs, then create a genetically modified bacterium or virus". The Israeli government could thus wipe out Arabs by "spraying the organisms in the air or putting them in water supplies".

This "exclusive" bore an uncanny resemblance to a short story written two years ago by Doron Stanitsky, a lecturer at Tel Aviv University, in which a scientist at the Nes Tziona institute works on a top-secret project to develop "a virus capable of attacking only Arabs". Stanitsky printed 80 copies of his work and sent it to Israeli newspapers — but emphasised that it was purely a satirical fantasy.

The *Sunday Times*'s foreign editor Sean Ryan was indignant when the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* pointed out the similarity. It was, he insisted, "nonsense to claim the story was based on fiction... We stand behind it completely."

How odd, then, that no British newspaper bothered to follow up the *Sunday Times*'s great scoop. Sour grapes, no doubt. What is even odder, however, is that since its original splash of 15 November the *Sunday Times* itself hasn't printed another word on the subject.

"Christmas is lousy this year — haven't sold a thing"

NEIL WALLIS, editor of the *People*, penned a "Royal Wedding Exclusive" for his newspaper which "sensationally revealed for the first time" Princess Diana's two-year romance with heart surgeon Hasnat Khan.

Fascinating facts [*sic*] were revealed. Apparently Diana only went out with Dodi to make Hasnat jealous. What's more, she wanted to have Hasnat's children to make a multiracial statement to the world.

These revelations were read with interest by Simone Simmons, author of *Diana, the Secret Years*. Simmons, one of the princess's soothsayers, had made exactly the same revelations — exclusively — in her own book. Even more embarrassingly, the "juiciest" bits of *Diana, the Secret Years*, including the Hasnat affair, had already been serialised in the *People*'s sister rag, the *Sunday Mirror*. So much for Wallis's exclusive.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"We hear Richard Lambert, the editor, telling his staff that 'the top three values of the [*Financial Times*] pages are the same as they always were: accuracy, accuracy, accuracy'."

— Ian Hargreaves, former deputy editor of the *FT*, pinpoints the secret of the newspaper's success in the *Evening Standard* media section, Wednesday 25 November.

"Correction: Because of a typographical error, it was stated in an article yesterday that analysts estimated Pearson's year-end debt would be £3.5bn following the Simon & Schuster acquisition. The correct figure is £2.5bn."

— *Financial Times*, Wednesday 25 November.

"EXCLUSIVE" shrieked the *Daily Mirror* over a series of "hilarious clangers dropped by this year's GCSE candidates in history, music, religion and classical studies".

"The wonderful misunderstandings and misspellings of our 16 year olds were compiled by examiners nationwide," explained hack Christian Fraser. *Whoops!*

Almost every one of the "hilarious clangers" featured in Fraser's article could be found in *School Yarns and Howlers*, compiled by Frank M. Richmond in... 1934.

THE festive spirit has failed to work its magic on *Financial Times* supremo Stephen "Slasher" Hill.

He has formally banned all *FT* Christmas cards, despite pleas from department heads for their usual quota to send to business contacts, and in a seasonal memo he warns that "disciplinary procedures" (i.e. sackings) will ensue if anyone dares disobey him.

The official reason for his Scrooge-like behaviour is that the money would be better spent on charity. The *FT* will grant free advertising space to the charity of Slasher's choice — hardly a great sacrifice, however, since corporate advertising always falls sharply at Christmas. The real reason is a feeble attempt at cost-cutting, which hasn't been going too well at the Pink 'Un.

Hill's clearance of 35 hacks two years ago coincided with the paper's big push to expand American circulation — which promptly necessitated the hiring of nearly 50 contract editorial staff, thus wiping out his "savings" at a stroke.

Hence the latest penny-pinching wheeze: no *FT* Christmas card, no comment.

DAVID FINGLETON, the music critic sacked by the *Express* for falling asleep on the job, has been finding his new job at the *Times* tiring, too.

Before the recent first night of English National Opera's *Boris Godunov* began, he regaled members of the audience in nearby seats with loud and lascivious fantasies about the alleged past sex life of the young Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

Then as the lights dimmed he said to his young female companion: "I hope you've read the synopsis, dear!" Soon after the music started he adopted a pose of the most profound relaxation, interrupted only by regular, long grunts of appreciation of the performance — that in anyone other than a music critic for a distinguished newspaper, could have been mistaken for snoring!

THE *Daily Telegraph*, desperate to be seen as the Voice of Youth, pulled off a front-page double whammy recently.

Despite all the ads for stairlifts and hip baths, it has taken on one of the All Saints guitarists as a correspondent for Peterbore. So you can imagine Charles Moore's genuine excitement when Patsy Kensit flew into Heathrow carrying some flowers and he could slap a three-column photo of her on the front page.

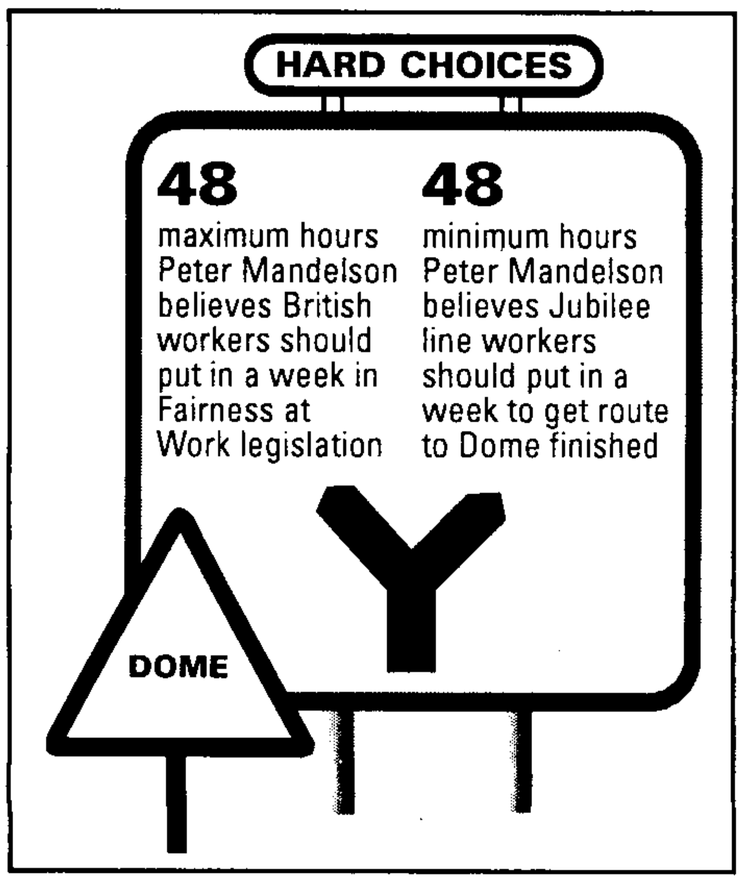
Not only that, but executives also found an excuse to run a picture of Liz Hurley under the masthead beside the unlikely heading *Why Liz should shop on the Internet*. Readers following the plug to page four had to look very hard though to find the scantily-clad Ms Hurley's connection to the story. Buried deep in a long piece on on-line shopping was the fact that somewhere on the information superhighway one can buy a handbag similar to the one once carried by the actress. There's a story for you.

Stacey Harvey from Forncett End near Norwich has been a keen member of South Norfolk Poncy Club for four years. *Eastern Daily Press*

VERY LATE NEWS

THE criminal cases review commission has at long last made up its mind what to do about the case of James Hanratty, who was hanged in 1962 for the A6 murder.

Its decision, which is likely to make the headlines, is expected to be announced by the time the *Eye* hits the streets. For more information, see next issue.


HARD CHOICES
48
maximum hours Peter Mandelson believes British workers should put in a week in Fairness at Work legislation
48
minimum hours Peter Mandelson believes Jubilee line workers should put in a week to get route to Dome finished
DOME

IN THE STALLS

WHY, theatregoers must be wondering, has there been a spate of reviews for the West End musical *Chicago*? It is not a new show; it has not been redirected or transferred to another theatre; and although there has been one main cast change — Nicola Hughes for Ute Lemper — this happened months ago.

The reason for the sudden renewal of ticket-selling publicity is that the show's producers and PR people managed to persuade the national press to come by simply labelling one night last week a "new first night" and promising a lavish party afterwards. Lo and behold, the thirsty hacks swallowed the bait — plus trebles all round.

"I think we might be busy — I'll just check the diary"

READERWATCH

The Daily Telegraph

IN THE past couple of weeks the many retired majors who read the *Daily Telegraph* have been treated to important front-page headlines about Melinda Messenger's wedding, Jerry Hall's divorce and "Why the whole world wants Matt Damon."

But while the rest of the paper turns itself into a clone of *Hello!*, there is at least one small redoubt that is forever Shepton Mallet. On the letters page, blissfully free of any mention of Gazza or Zoe Ball, the spirit of Sir Herbert Gussett is alive and harrumphing.

3 November: "Sir," General Sir Walter Walker writes from Sherborne, Dorset, "Is not the nauseating lifestyle so prevalent today even in the highest places little better than that portrayed in the recent BBC1 programme *Wildlife on One* showing the activities of the pygmy chimps?"

9 November: Another brief but thoughtful letter, this time from John B. Riscoe of Bridgewater, Somerset. "Sir — Don't the French realise that the rest of Europe regards Napoleon as a second-rate Hitler?"

11 November: "Was I alone," wonders M.A. Watkins of Chepstow, Gwent, "in being appalled at the Speaker's appearance in a white mackintosh at the Remembrance ceremony on Sunday?" Almost certainly not. As we shall see, however, *Telegraph* letter-writers seem to need constant reassurance that they are not alone, or indeed downright barmy.

12 November: Readers queue up to offer their animadversions on the European debate. "For the greater part of this century, Germany has sought the takeover of Europe," observes Selwyn Carter of Oakham, Rutland. "Helmut Kohl was a better strategist, and a better salesman, than Hitler."

18 November: "Sir — I surely cannot be alone in finding the spectacle of the Prince of Wales kicking a football, fooling about in a `dole queue' and cavorting with the Spice Girls unacceptable," protests Mrs Jane Elliot of London SW1. Keith Trembling of Nottingham has another gripe: "By inviting Peter Mandelson to his 50th birthday party, the Prince has shown a deplorable lack of judgment."

19 November: "Sir — The last time I visited the site of the battle of Waterloo, its associated shop was well stocked with Napoleonic memorabilia," reveals Major-General David Goodman of Sutton Veny, Wilts. "I searched in vain for a suitable memento bearing the victor's effigy... This is history rewritten!"

20 November: "Sir — Am I mad, or is everyone else?" asks Captain H. A. Lazarus of Manchester. A good question; but without pausing for a reply, he poses a supplementary. Why oh why should Britain have anything whatsoever to do with Europe, "an organisation whose purposes are French revenge for Agincourt, Waterloo and rescuing them from German occupation, and German revenge for losing?"

26 November: *Telegraph* readers are unanimously outraged at the government's plan to remove hereditary peers from the Upper House. "Is there any limit to the hypocrisy of Tony Blair?" demands Granville Broadhurst of Accrington, Lancs. "One begins to wonder where his jackboot will fall next." Professor Richard Porter of Doncaster attacks the Blairite fascist junta from a scientific angle: "Hereditary peers are most deserving of a vote in the Upper House. They embody the best of both nature and nurture. The extraordinary genes of some long-forgotten ancestor may now be diluted, but those that remain must give them a slight edge over the rest of us."

27 November: The law lords have pronounced on General Pinochet, and a nation mourns. "Sir — On Wednesday I became ashamed of being British. Ary Blesovsky, Brodick, Isle of Arran."

30 November: "Sir — A recent public meeting in Yeovil, Somerset, spectacularly demonstrated the nation's feelings on EMU," writes Idris R. Francis of Petersfield, Hants, though she does not say if Brigadier Buffy Frobisher was in attendance. "An opportunity of Churchillian magnitude lies open before William Hague," adds Julian Bates of Kingsbridge, Devon. "He should lead the nation to the restoration of our ancient, sovereign independence..." Quite how Hague can do this when not actually in government isn't explained.

1 December: Another day, another cause for national outrage. "Sir — Did Margaret Beckett wear her black tuxedo trouser suit to greet the Queen to cock a snook at tradition?" asks a furious Jenny Nicholson of London SW4.

2 December: Christmas is coming, but *Telegraph* readers won't give up their inalienable right to keep grumbling. "Sir — Is anyone looking forward to Christmas?" wonders Robert Warner of Woodstock, Oxon. He and his family, we learn, are not.

3 December: Sir Herbert Gussett and his chums in the saloon bar get to grips with tax harmonisation. "Sir — I am confused," writes Peter Bridgwood of Combe Throop, Somerset. Fortunately, Rev. Prof William Frend of Little Wilbrahams, Cambs, is on hand to explain all. "So now we know. The German government is determined gradually but irreversibly to force us into EMU on its own terms. When will our government learn that the aims of German foreign policy have remained consistent whether under Bismarck or Hitler?"

4 December: "Sir – Your headline `Hague fires Cranborne' bespeaks a tragedy. It should have been the other way round." Thus bespeaks Miles Robinson of Burwash, East Sussex. Most readers, however, are delighted by the Tory leader's fearless decisiveness. "May I suggest," writes C. Campbell Smith of Knapton, Norfolk, "that he [Hague] now draws his sword from its scabbard completely, holds it high like King Harry and calls for the people to march with him." Elsewhere in today's paper, meanwhile, it is business as usual: four large photos of young women in "raunchy" leather trousers, a piece about "saucy lingerie" with special reference to thongs and suspender belts — plus Gloria Hunniford on "the joys of middle-aged love". If that doesn't stiffen the sinews and summon up the blood, what will?

LOTTERY WINNERS

GOOD to see culture secretary Chris Smith's beaming face on TV's national lottery birthday draw — only the Camelot directors had bigger grins.

Here was the culture secretary who, under the 1993 lottery act, has a duty to see that proceeds going from the lottery to good causes are as great as possible. Yet right under his nose Camelot had just swiped £11.6m from the good causes to serve its own ends.

The monster guaranteed jackpot of £25m meant £16.4m had to be injected into the prize fund — money which would otherwise go to good causes. This whacking prize attracted only 13 million extra sales, leaving the good causes with a net loss of £11.6m and Camelot with a gain of around £200,000. A nice birthday gift for them — but not such a happy birthday for the good causes.

Meanwhile, what of Camelot's tasteful Prize Pudding scratchcard, adorned with its cheery Christmas pud? The prize money it is offering is almost 65 percent against the 58 percent of proceeds dished out the rest of the year.

Camelot is not averse (see *Eye* 964) to letting people think that money spent on lottery games is a substitute for charitable giving. But half a minute's mental arithmetic proves it most decidedly is not. Forty million Prize Pudding cards have been issued at £1 each. They are paying out 7p in the pound more than normal. So, were all 40 million sold, the "good causes" would be worse off to the tune of some £2.8m.

Camelot may argue that increased sales will make up the shortfall. But they will have to sell a hell of a lot of cards in the next two weeks. Sales at the end of November were the lowest since they were introduced in 1995. As ever with Camelot, the real prize puddings are the public.

LEGAL NEWS

THE legal world will be rocked to its foundations by news from the notorious law firm Mishcon de Reya, famous for looking after the Princess of Wales's memorial fund (until now, anyway) and for charging huge fees. The firm, it seems, is not paying its own bills.

A small translation company has twice had to chase Mishcon de Reya for money it was owed. The first time, after 60 days of non-payment, the translators filed a claim at Clerkenwell court. Shortly after that the bill was hastily paid. Now the translators are chasing the tight-fisted law firm for payment again.

NEW OLD SAYINGS

When the going gets tough, the tough get 'executive stress'

HP SAUCE IN THE TEAROOM

LORD CRANBORNE sought to excuse his arrant treason as "putting loyalty to our constitution ahead of loyalty to party". But, rightly, no one trusts the word of a scheming Cecil. In fact the wily courtier was driven by a much more noble motive: loyalty to his chums. He's just too much the aristocrat to admit it.

Last summer Cranborne held (fully authorised) secret talks with the then Labour leader in the Lords, Ivor Richard. He believed he'd extracted a "gentleman's agreement" that working hereditary peers who sat on the frontbenches of all parties (plus a few worthy crossbenchers) would be allowed to cash-in their earldoms, viscountcies and so on for plain life peerages, thus allowing them to continue their political careers. It was further understood that it would be left to the parties to draw up their own lists of survivors.

But when the going got rough over the bill allowing closed lists for European parliamentary elections, Baroness Jay, who replaced Lord Richard in July's reshuffle, made it clear she was no gentleman and no such agreement stood. That would mean that many of Cranborne's close friends and colleagues, including the still young and ambitious Tom Strathclyde, would be thrown out on their ears next March. Even if Hague were to put them forward for life peerages in the next honours list, the prime minister could simply cross them off. While the frosty Jay played hard cop, Lord Irvine sidled round, all sweet insinuation, with his cunning compromise.

Nor were the Tories the only ones subjected to these tactics. The Liberal Democrat Earl Russell was a target too. But the Labour emissary sent to strong-arm him returned completely baffled to report that he could not tell from the gnomic reply he'd received from the eccentric earl whether the saintly and innocent Russell had fully understood he was being threatened, or whether the warning had been rebuffed with sublime contempt. In any case, Russell broke ranks with his own party and voted against closed lists.

'Urquhart'

PADDY ASHDOWN is beginning to look a very worried man indeed.

Not only was he obliged by a majority vote of his parliamentary colleagues to vote against the queen's speech (he wanted to abstain), but there is now a whispering campaign against him.

Worried Liberal Democrats have been overheard in the tearoom murmuring that Paddy is losing the best chance that they have had this century of being the real opposition and taking votes off Labour in some of its rotten northern fastnesses.

Meanwhile Lib Dem activists have taken a leaf out of the "old" Labour Bible and organised a Campaign for Liberal Democracy. The campaigners met for the first time last weekend in south London and openly attacked Pantsdown's policy of cooperating with Labour. A book has been opened on who will be the first senior Lib Dem MP to throw in his lot with the anti-Pantsdown brigade. Favourite is Simon Hughes, with Charles Kennedy a close second.

WHEN Labour MPs learned last summer that their ballot papers for the PLP section of Labour's national executive committee were numbered, many fainthearts decided that the risk of the whips discovering they had voted for Dennis Skinner was too great.

As a result Skinner lost, which was what the whips intended. But others were not prepared to take this sleight lightly and complained vigorously to the PLP liaison committee, chaired by PLP chairman Clive Soley.

However, at the committee's last meeting Labour general-secretary Margaret McDonagh, instead of banning the numbering of ballot papers, demanded that the practice should henceforth take place every year. It was, she said, "the most effective way of preventing possible fraud in an election" (and also the best possible way of keeping the likes of Dennis Skinner out for good).

McDonagh's lack of confidence in the ability of the PLP to conduct its own elections has infuriated many MPs. But the real target of their anger is Clive Soley. "He is going to have to decide whose side he's on — us or theirs", is the cry.

THE parliamentary Labour party's (PLP) trade union group turned out in force for its monthly meeting — surprising given that the guest of honour was the increasingly dull TUC general-secretary John Monks.

Even more surprising was the brave stance of the usually on-message Alan Johnson MP on the issue of trade union rights and the generally flabby attitude of the government and the trade secretary Peter Mandelson in getting round to legislating for them.

Unfortunately for the uncharacteristically forthright Johnson, the Prince of Darkness chanced to make a surprise visit to the meeting, opening the door just as the Hull MP was in full flow. As the crestfallen Johnson watched his career prospects disintegrate, the brave Audrey Wise stepped in demanding to know if press reports that Mandelson is set on watering down the legislation were true. She was immediately set upon by Mandy and the great hope of the unions John Monks.

KEN PURCHASE, Labour MP for Wolverhampton North East and parliamentary private secretary to foreign secretary Robin Cook, was most indignant when the *Eye* accused him of getting a Rolex watch from the emir (dictator) of Bahrain on one of the MP's frequent visits there. He had got jewellery, he said, but wouldn't say what.

Now the *Independent* reports on its front page that Mr Purchase has been handing out Rolexes to all the other eight MPs who accompanied him on a recent freebie to Bahrain. On the same night, the Bahraini ambassador in London held a reception for the British-Bahrain society at the Cafe Royal, where he gave a "silver gift" to the society's chairman, Lord Walker, former Labour MP and deputy speaker of the House of Commons.

MORE on the British Airways prize "draw" at the Labour party conference where three lucky MPs picked up free airline tickets.

A closer look at the threesome shows BA itself had a stroke of good fortune when the draw was pulled. These weren't common Labour backbenchers but top drawer "new" Labourites and potential cabinet ministers.

Ivor Caplin is a rising star and just after conference he was appointed parliamentary private secretary to Margaret Beckett. Then there is Andrew Miller, who is doing consultancy work for Jack Cunningham on the Better Government white paper; and finally Janet Anderson, a junior minister in the culture department.

TONY BLAIR's visit to Wales to endorse the Welsh secretary Alun Michael as the man to lead the party into next year's assembly elections came unstuck over protocol: it is customary to notify the sitting MP of another member's intending visit.

Twenty-four hours before the PM was due to descend on her Cynon Valley constituency, Ann Clwyd was blissfully unaware of the honour until a journalist told her. A couple of hours later Ms Clwyd, a leftwinger with a mind of her own, got the official message. Strangely, Downing Street insisted the visit had been arranged long ago.

Blair used his trip to the Valleys to praise the pliant Michael (the PM's vicar over the Severn Bridge) while bollocking the media for daring to point out that his opponent Rhodri Morgan is streets ahead in the popularity stakes.

Morgan was passed over for a job 18 months ago even though he had spent years on the opposition frontbench. The consolation prize — chairing the public administration committee — enabled him to preside over a lengthy grilling of Alastair Campbell, Blair's mouthpiece, from which the head spinner emerged the loser.

THE Labour party in Wales continues to show its true colours — a lighter shade of pale blue.

One Welsh leftie, Chris Maher, was recently turned down for party membership because he stood as an independent socialist against the Labour candidate in the Wrexham council elections. The party blamed him for reducing its majority and allowing a Tory candidate to win.

Imagine his surprise, then, when prominent Welsh Tory and prospective assembly candidate Stuart Andrew defected to Labour and was greeted with open arms. Surely this wasn't the same Stuart Andrew who so narrowly defeated Labour in Wrexham? It was.

ENTRUST is the regulatory body set up by the department of the environment to oversee the distribution of landfill tax credits to worthy organisations.

When it was looking for environmental organisations to distribute its landfill largesse, it chose the Princes Trust's organisation PTBRO, which has been able to cream off 10 percent in administration expenses.

Perhaps the director of the PTBRO, one Mr Neil Caldwell, could explain exactly why his organisation has won the right to administer landfill tax handouts. Or perhaps the director of Entrust, Mr Neil Caldwell, could do the explaining?

'Backbiter'

Michael Mates Meeting

"We were due to meet Michael Mates MP on 25 September but he called off at the last minute due to good poisoning.

NFU (Southern) newsletter

Superintendent, Refreshment Department--A. D. O. Bibbiani

Banqueting Manager--Miss L. M. McWilliam, MBE

Chef--M. Thatcher

House of Lords, Principal Officers & Officials

LORD JENKINS AT THE RACES

LORDS FOR HIRE

THE following peers are paid advisers to companies operating in the highly government-regulated area of telecommunications and new technology:

LIFE PEERS

Lord Baker of Dorking: Adviser to Mercury plc.
Lord Barnett: Chairman of Origin Ltd.
Lord Borrie: Director of TeleWest Communications plc.
Lord Cocks of Hartcliffe: Consultant to British Telecom plc.
Lord Parkinson: Director of Odyssey Corporation plc; director of Planet Online Ltd; director of Mobile Phone Supercover Ltd; director of Integrated Technology (Europe) Ltd.
Lord Pym: Director of Diamond Cable Communications plc.
Lord Taylor of Blackburn: Adviser to Electronic Data Systems Ltd.

HEREDITARY PEERS

Lord Beaverbrook: Director of Highway One Corporation Ltd (holder of a telecommunications licence from the DTI).
Lord Derwent: Managing director of Hutchison Whampoa (Europe) Ltd; director of Orange plc.
Lord Rennell: Adviser to Kanemetsu UK Ltd.
Lord Renwick: Adviser to Toshiba.

That's the end of the *Eye*'s series on Lords for Hire.

ARMS UPDATE

WHEN the government appointed Tony Edwards, of TI Group, head of defence export services (see last *Eye*), did it look at an awkward episode in its new employee's recent history?

In July this year TI Group decided to pay the US government $12.35m to settle an overcharging dispute brought under whistleblower legislation. A former employee told the American defence department that Derbyshire-based TI subsidiary Dowty-Woodville Polymer had been fiddling the prices on wing seals it made for "Swing Wing" jets.

TI Group denied any liability but felt the settlement "advantageous". Dowty-Woodville's chief executive at the time was... Tony Edwards.

ARMS company and Labour party donor Raytheon has further connections with Blair's "new" Labourites.

This year Frank Cook, Labour MP for Stockton North, went on a junket to the Paris air show courtesy of Raytheon E-Systems, a wing of Raytheon specialising in high-tech weaponry and surveillance gear.

Like its new parent company, E-Systems has paid its share of fines. In 1990 it pleaded guilty to a criminal charge of conspiring to defraud the US government after falsifying performance tests on field radios for the army. In 1994 the firm paid out $4.3m to a Texan called Carlos Uribe. Uribe sued them when his wife was accidentally shot by an E-Systems employee who was trying to bug a hotel room.

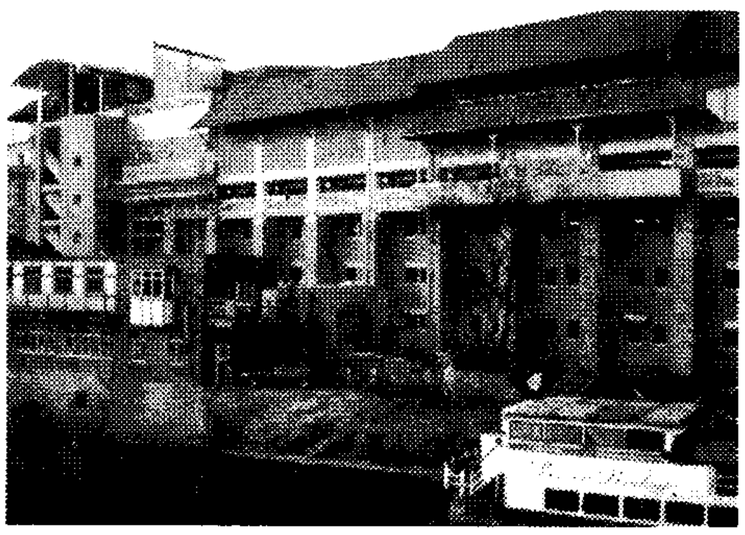
Why should Labour MP and Amnesty International member Frank Cook want a freebie from an arms company with such a dubious history?

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE view of Durham from the railway station high on the hillside is spectacular: across the valley, castle and cathedral rise up on a hill above the River Wear — a glorious symbol of the power and privilege of the Prince Bishops who once ran the County Palatine.

Pevsner — not easily impressed — wrote how "Durham is one of the great experiences of Europe to the eyes of those who appreciate architecture... The group of Cathedral, Castle and Monastery on the rock can only be compared to Avignon or Prague." Those buildings, together with the contiguous town on the peninsular formed by the loop of the Wear, have been designated a world heritage site. And quite right too.

So the first-time visitor descends from the station and walks towards the city with high expectations. These are soon dashed. New inner ring roads and roundabouts impede pro-gress and destroy serenity while it is soon discovered that the banks of the river by the old Framwellgate Bridge are but a mess of muddy brick shops and other banal buildings raised in the 1960s and 70s. Only when the visitor starts climbing again, up older streets and through the Market Place to reach the wonderful cathedral does Durham again seem what it ought to be.



Now Durham has a brand new architectural attraction to make the visitor ponder what sort of person sits on the planning committee and what deals are done in the smoke-filled rooms of the city council. It is a new shopping centre — named so cleverly and appropriately the Land of the Prince Bishops — and it runs from the Market Place to the river next to the ancient and special Elvet Bridge.

There is a new pedestrian street of shops with red brick façades of reassuring banality running behind Messrs Boots the cash chemists in the Market Place. This is imaginatively called High Street, and Messrs Boots were the developers. But this street does not run to the river as a much bigger block stands in the way which is occupied by British Home Stores, as can be seen from the BHS logo on the stumpy stone tower by the road bridge. Other parts of the new red brick-clad multi-storey car park below which enhances the riverside (excitingly illuminated with fluorescent tubes at night) are enlivened by turquoise-green glazed bricks and one of those modish coved metal roofs on stilts. A decade ago it would have been one of those ubiquitous Crystal Palace glazed arched transepts, and two decades ago a Casson mansard. Such is the power of fashion.

This thrilling new architectural ensemble was designed by something called Benoy Architects, of Newark, Notts, to enhance the conservation area in which it stands, or sprawls. Oddly enough it has not been well received locally. The City of Durham Trust has complained: "In terms of size and scale, and in style and detail, this critically located project is disastrous for the townscape of Durham." But who cares? Certainly not Messrs Boots who, anxious to make a killing out of heritage, have put the whole shopping centre on the market and hope to make much more than the £40m it cost to build. Besides, the Land of the Prince Bishops is only a foretaste of great things to come.

Mr Colin Shearsmith, the new chief executive of the city council, has a "Vision for the City Centre". This involves more shops as he wants to make the cathedral city "a leisure shopping destination in addition to its traditional tourism and shopping roles". Never mind that Newcastle's horrible Metro Centre (which almost bankrupted the Church of England) is only a few miles away at Gateshead, we cannot have too many shops in the new millennium. There is the Millennium City Project north of the Market Place which is getting lottery money and which might not be bad as it is being designed by decent architects in the shape of MacCormac Jamieson Pritchard. But the worry is the three sites selected for largescale redevelopment — Back Silver Street and Walkergate by the river to the north-west of the castle and Framwellgate Peth below the station. All three sites are owned by the council, which has formed Durham City Partnership with the county council and English Partnerships, and which is seeking "a development partner to undertake development... as part of the strategy to revitalise the city centre".

Does the charming old city centre of Durham need revitalising? What a silly question: of course it does. Why else would there be so many development opportunities? David Lock Associates have prepared a "Development Framework for the Heart of Durham" for the city council. This correctly notes that "the built development is epitomised by a collection of roofs climbing up the slopes of the peninsular... This pattern is related to the historic street network, the subdivision of land into plots, and to the topography. This character is one which must be respected." No doubt it was owing to some oversight that Messrs Boots were not given such advice for their shopping centre, or told that the last thing Durham needs is more car parks for more cars.

Given that Durham is so small, so famous and so precious, the antics of the city and county councils — both Labour-controlled — have figured a surprising number of times in these pages. Tony Blair's constituency is nearby, of course, although Durham is certainly not "new" Labour. Rather it is old, not to say antediluvian, Labour. On reflection, however, perhaps Durham shows that when it comes to working closely with big business, caring about heritage and encouraging good new architecture, there is nothing to choose between New and Old Labour.

'Piloti'

WITH the US and Britain still flexing their muscles over Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, Britain's own biological warfare establishment Porton Down is trying to bolster its poor public image.

The germ laboratory has received a public relations blow. Conwy MP Betty Williams is demanding reassurances after files revealed that experiments carried out between 1957 and 1963 involved scientists from Porton Down sending planes from the north-east to Cornwall spraying a chemical over the land below. The North Wales coast was particularly affected by vast clouds containing zinc cadmium sulphide, which can cause lung and kidney disorders.

Porton Down spin doctors have been trying to improve their image for a while now. First there was the name change for the chemical and biological defence establishment which runs the laboratory. It has now been rebranded as the fluffy-sounding protection and life sciences division. Secondly, when the South Africans earlier this year revealed their use of Porton Down materials in their germ warfare plans, Richard Titball, a laboratory representative, popped up to announce that they were working on an anti-cancer drug and an anti-plague vaccine.

LORD ARCHER RHYMING SLANG (contd)

TV EYE

Hard News (Channel 4)

IT IS hard to imagine a prize more sought-after by the hundreds of eager and impoverished television production companies than a Channel Four commission for an hour of prime time on a Saturday. Rivals were sick with jealousy when just such a commission was handed to Clark Productions for an in-depth investigation into the *Guardian*'s allegations of the alleged faking of *The Connection*, an award-winning Carlton TV programme about drugs.

Many who watched the *Hard News* programme could not believe their eyes. There seemed no thrust, no theme. Such critics missed the central point: repairing a huge dent in the pride and dignity of the most powerful creatures in modern television — the commissioning editors. These mandarins lord it over the independent companies like lairds over ancient fiefdoms, and in the process their opinions of themselves exceed all normal boundaries of conceit.

The articles in the *Guardian* which alleged that Carlton's programme *The Connection* was a fake punctured the pride of a little circle of commissioning editors and their friends. Marc de Beaufort, the glamorous faker of the programme, had put together several successful programmes for this circle. Roger James, the key executive at Carlton which broadcast *The Connection*, and Don Christopher, Carlton's legal officer who let the programme through, were friends and former associates of David Lloyd, current affairs commissioning editor at Channel Four. The sheer impudence of a mere newspaper in challenging such a mighty combination of genius quite obviously could not be tolerated.

To teach the *Guardian* a lesson, Channel Four commissioned an old trusty, Bernard Clark, a personal friend of Don Christopher, to prepare a special edition of its former weekly media commentary, **Hard News**. The presenter of the programme was former *Hard News* frontman Ray Snoddy; a man who combines a twitching sanctimoniousness about journalistic standards with an ungrudging admiration for great newspaper proprietors such as Robert Maxwell and Rupert Murdoch.

No expense was spared. The *Hard News* programme left Channel Four little change from £150,000. Its central aim from the outset was to put the *Guardian* busybodies in their place. At once, however, the project ran into difficulties. It quickly became obvious that *The Connection*, which purported to expose "a new route" for heroin to Britain from Colombia by tracing an actual journey by a Colombian "mule" who had swallowed drugs, was pure fantasy. The drug the "mule" was filmed swallowing was peppermint. Even the peppermint wasn't there when he was filmed on a flight to London. He did not "get through" the authorities at Heathrow — he was sent back at once because his papers were suspect (his passport was forged). Worse, the mule's ticket was paid for by the programme's producer and several thousand pounds were missing from the budget — probably because the programme also paid for the false passport. The only "connection", in short, was between the programme makers and a group of willing fakers in Columbia.

Every one of the *Guardian*'s main allegations was unassailable. But the reaction of the *Hard News* programme-makers was to continue with its allegations against the *Guardian*. The first third of the programme sought to expose "inconsistencies" in the *Guardian* articles. For instance, the *Guardian* quoted the mule saying he had swallowed "eight" packets of the fake drugs. *Hard News* quoted the mule saying he might have swallowed 16 or even 20 packets. Aha — a glaring contradiction exposed there!

Again the *Guardian* quoted the mule and his "loader" saying the packets they swallowed contained eight mints. *Hard News* found an expert who made the astonishing discovery that it is difficult to swallow eight whole mints in one packet. Aha — another *Guardian* distortion exposed unless (as seems rather likely) the mints had been crushed into powder.

Hard News spent a huge hunk of its time attacking the main source of the programme, de Beaufort's researcher Adriana Quintana. She had complained in writing before the programme went out that it had been faked. James and Christopher said they had not even bothered to read her complaints properly. Instead of highlighting this scandal and championing the whistleblower, *Hard News* set about humiliating her with trivial alleged inconsistencies in her different statements.

CARLTON SELECT
5.00 Birds of a Feather. Comedy, starring Linda Robson. **5.30** Birds of a Feather. **6.00** Birds of a Feather. **6.30** Birds of a Feather. **7.00** Birds of a Feather. **7.30** Birds of a Feather. **8.00** Birds of a Feather. **8.30** Birds of a Feather. **9.00** Birds of a Feather. **9.30** Birds of a Feather. **10.00** Birds of a Feather. **11.00** Birds of a Feather.

Western Mail Magazine

For instance, she had said the mule and his loader were acting the parts required of them by Carlton, and were marginally connected with the drugs trade. "You might well wonder," twitched Snoddy with a telling leer at the camera, "how a lead actor could be mixed up in the drug world". What was so wondrous about such a dual role was not explained.

Only after the *Guardian* had been "exposed" over such dubious minutiae did Snoddy and Clark, in the second third of their programme, grudgingly concede that every major allegation by the paper was entirely true. Yet *The Connection*, they concluded, "may not have been such a wholesale fake as the *Guardian* made out". Then, like dogs returning to their own vomit, the programme-makers resumed their high-minded questioning of the *Guardian*'s standards.

The programme carried several extracts from an interview with *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger in which he calmly answered all the charges against his journalists. During a break in the interview Bernard Clark was recorded as protesting to Rusbridger: "My programme is falling apart and it didn't help when you agreed to be interviewed." Although the programme had indeed fallen apart, however, it was still broadcast to the British public.

Before *Hard News* went out Rusbridger insisted that the interests of the programme-makers be declared on the programme. Snoddy duly complied, admitting that de Beaufort, James, Christopher and Lloyd were all closely connected and that he, Snoddy, worked for the *Times*, a rival paper to the *Guardian*. In a final sanctimonious flurry, however, he wondered why Michael Sean Gillard, one of the *Guardian* authors of the series, had not declared *his* interest — he had once worked as a researcher under Roger James. It had apparently not occurred to Snoddy that an attack on a former boss is hardly an "interest".

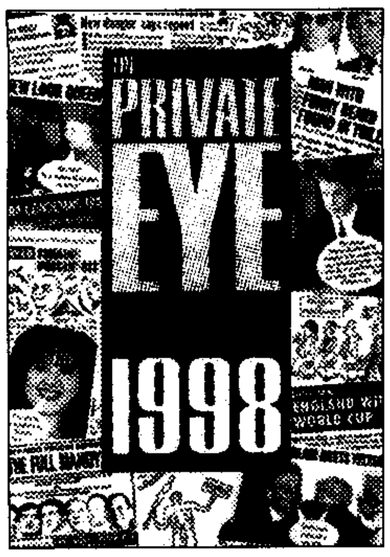
Carlton's own inquiry has now found that the *Guardian* allegations and many more besides are justified. The awards have been sent back and Carlton will be fined. But what about Channel Four, Clark Productions and Snoddy? Will they have to answer for their appalling programme... or will they be called on again to lecture us all on journalistic standards?

PS: Channel Four *Despatches* on 3 December, commissioned by David Lloyd, strongly attacked the Law Society for not punishing wayward solicitors who sell their clients short. A good example which didn't feature in the programme was the case of a former lawyer for the actors' union Equity, who consistently failed an actor called Andrew Keir in dealing with his injury claim.

Keir, who has since died, suffered grievously as a result of this negligence and complained over and over again. In 1985 the solicitors' disciplinary tribunal eventually reprimanded the lawyer and fined him £1,500, but did not strike him off. The lawyer went on to work for Channel Four and Carlton Television. His name? Don Christopher.

'Red Eyes'

JUST PUBLISHED!
3 NEW PRIVATE EYE BOOKS



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one foot in the Grave
IT'S THAT BEWILDERED OAP...
FOR WHOM NOTHING GOES RIGHT...
RETURNING FOR HER CHRISTMAS DAY REPEAT
Ken Pyne

MEDIA NEWS

***World in Action*, ITV's flagship current affairs programme, had hoped to go out on an incendiary note before it is replaced by the new *Sixty Minutes*.**

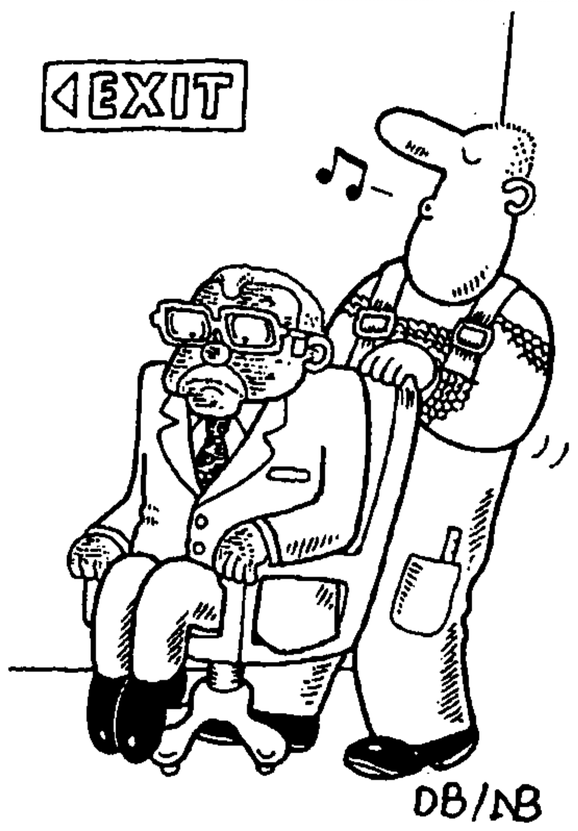
Its last programme was to have been about the unionist/nationalist divide and anti-English feeling in Scotland. But word soon reached the Scottish National party, which is campaigning in the North East Scotland by-election, that some creative documentary methods were being used.

SNP chief executive Mike Russell learnt that the *World in Action* team was using actors posing as boorish English rugby fans to secretly film hostile reactions from Scots. Suspicions of an anti-SNP programme were confirmed when the camera crew began trailing the SNP by-election candidate and repeatedly asked him questions about anti-Englishness.

Russell phoned *World in Action* to ask if actors were indeed being used. Staff denied it, but Granada did admit to a Scottish journalist that "two guys in England rugby shirts" had been used to gauge the response to "English symbolism". The spokesman also admitted they were "hired from a casting agency".

Just as the SNP was complaining formally to the Independent Television Commission, the programme's producers announced that they were scrapping the programme. Despite elaborate efforts they had not found enough evidence of anti-English feeling.

NEW OLD SAYINGS



Better late than Trevor

GORGEOUS, pouting Sue Lawley annoyed BBC top brass recently when she used her role as chair of the bi-annual governors' seminar to moan about the number of "ordinary" people appearing on prime-time TV.

She was particularly agitated about the ratings achieved by low-budget, low-brow docu-soaps. "We live in a broadcasting climate in which a middle-aged lavatory cleaner who has failed her driving test five or six times can pull in an audience of 13 million viewers," she told the seminar, which included the deadly duo of John Birt and Christopher Bland.

Later in the day she returned to her theme and attacked the recent docu-soap *The Clampers*. But none of this rang any bells with Birt. When he made a 10-minute speech he used the word "integrity" 11 times and rebutted some of Lawley's claims. "Our programmes tell us tellingly (*sic*) how life is lived in the United Kingdom and around the world. They'll be an extraordinary text for future historians."

Yes: what *will* the A.J.P. Taylors of 100 years hence make of *Driving School, The Cruise* and *Hotel*?

❐ This gigantic flatpoll cabbage was voted a winner by judges at the 1997 Helston Fatstock Show. It was grown by George Rogers of Hayle from his own seed

Helston & District Gazette

ONE WAY to divert attention from controversial topics at the BBC is to focus on trivia — a device used successfully by Claire Dresser, letters editor of *Ariel*, the in-house propaganda sheet.

Thus in the week hacks across the corporation were discussing the censoring of the Peter Mandelson story — not to mention useless computers and the loss of yet more research resources — *Ariel* readers were treated to letters about, er, hot drinks and sandwich selection, plus a four-column diagram called "Your guide to getting a cup of tea at Television Centre".

The next week, anyone wanting to react to John Birt's ruminations "on the trials and pleasures of leading the BBC" found the letters space taken by an assistant producer moaning that the "cappuccino coffee from Broadcasting House is 66p, and a larger cup (with real milk) at Television Centre second floor news room tea bar is 44p".

Was that all? No. A news technician was allowed to ramble about scrambled canteen eggs made from powdered egg. And someone else wrote at great length about the controversial cost of a sachet of brown sauce — controversial because tomato ketchup, mayonnaise and chutney are free. *Ariel* clearly knows on which side its bread is buttered.

ONE of the more terrifying moments for journalists attending the training course for war zone safety run by Centurion Risk Assessment is a mock abduction.

All of a sudden former royal marine commandos in balaclavas rush in to hijack cowering hacks at gunpoint, putting bags over their heads and forcing them on to the floor. Resistance is futile, of course, and the "terrorists" never have much trouble binding and gagging their hostages before leading them away for tea and biscuits.

But "the lads" do remember one hack in particular who was so "irritating, bolshy and obnoxious" throughout the course that more brutal treatment was used — namely a pistol shot fired at a bowel-evacuatingly close range to his bagged head. The name of said hack? Step forward fog-horn voiced John Sweeney.

LOUD and long was the grumbling last summer when BBC news was shunted off to White City.

Producers complained publicly that ministers would not make the long trek westwards to appear on the *Today* programme, and privately they moaned about having to swop Liberty and Dickins & Jones in Regent Street for the retail delights of the Shepherds Bush BP garage.

Meanwhile one piece of BBC restructuring went unheralded: the shifting in August of the entire training unit *from* White City *into* central London at newly refurbished offices in Marylebone High Street. Largely the unit takes in staff for one or two-day courses which are treated (as in most professions) as an enjoyable break from routine. But why, many staff asked, did they need to be bang in the middle of the capital?

The answer could lie with the building's other occupant, the BBC's conference centre. Training is one of director-general John Birt's management mantras, and the unit's new location is ideal for parading his regime's success before investors and managers who don't want to interest themselves in anything as sordid as programme-making.

BBC2's docu-soap *Cumbrian Tales* was pulled from transmission last July after the *Eye* revealed that its generous features about a local pub, Paddy's Bar, might be connected to Patrick McCreanor, the programme's producer and... owner of Paddy's Bar.

As the festive season approaches, however, the enterprising Mr McCreanor is releasing a video of *Cumbrian Tales*, priced £12.99 from John Peel productions.

ART NEWS

MUCH publicity has been given to the recent loss and probable theft of valuable works of art from two famous London collections.

Two Constable sketches worth nearly £1m have gone missing from the Victoria & Albert Museum. And three paintings by lesser artists worth £75,000 went AWOL from the Courtauld Institute galleries.

The losses are a headache for the director of the Courtauld, Dr John Murdoch, and the head of paintings at the V&A, Dr Susan Lambert. But at least there is one thing Murdoch and Lambert have not had revealed in the press — the fact that they are man and wife. If that gets out, they could easily be labelled the art world's most careless couple.

WORLD OF HYPE

THE bow-tie brigade turned out in force two weeks ago for the lavish launch of M&C Saatchi Arts, the new ad agency headed by Judy Grahame, who was in charge of PR and marketing at the Royal Opera House during the reign of Mary "Whoops, there goes another million" Allen.

The launch-blurb was embellished by press cuttings recording Grahame's brilliant career at Covent Garden. These included one story about using Marks & Spencer rather than Armani suits as costumes (which backfired disastrously) and another about how she had managed to sell just 512 tickets to a production of *La Traviata* after commissioning a £54,000 ad campaign from, er, M&C Saatchi.

Strangely, however, the brochure omitted any press reports about her abrupt departure and pay-off from the Royal Opera.

ROBERT AYLING, chief executive of British Airways, is tremendously pleased with his new director of communications Simon Walker. But his enthusiasm is not entirely shared by Barbara Cassani, BA's managing director.

She has had to deal with indignant complaints from staff and public over BA's recent advertisements for its new gimmick "Go", tasteful slogan: "Phone in sick and Go." Ms Cassani has had to write to large numbers of protesters who ask if BA is promoting a massive increase in fraudulent sick pay claims.

"It was a humorous message to encourage people to travel more," she explained in *BA News*. Neither she nor Ayling have been amused by the rather large number of impertinent reminders of BA's campaign against alleged bogus sick claims by cabin crew staff during last year's strike.

Diana balls

"Yesterday 5,000 trees were to be planted to form a community woodland at the former Prestatyn Tip, a joint project between Denbighshire County Council and the Forest Authority. The planting included a block of over 1,000 trees in the shape of a D, in memory of Princess Diana and financed by Prestatyn Town Council. As the trees mature it is hoped the D will be visible."

— Rhyl/Prestatyn Visitor
(submitted by Mark Jones).

DOING THE ROUNDS

Auditing the auditors

HEALTH secretary Frank Dobson's promise to deliver a first class NHS that is "modern, dependable" and free of all the gross inequalities, variable standards and treatments by postcode that have blighted it for 50 years is laudable — but how can it be done?

As regular readers know, M.D. has exposed many alarming variations in the quality of care for treatments such as cleft palate, heart and biliary surgery in children, hip replacements and amniocentesis in adults. Such variations have more immediately tragic consequences in surgery, but they are equally alarming in general practice. A recent audit of how GPs in the south-east prescribe cholesterol-lowering drugs, called statins, found a 98 fold variation.

The key to ensuring a uniform high quality service is thought to be systematic audit. But to audit you first have to set a standard to audit against, and so far this has only been done for a few procedures. No one has yet defined the minimal acceptable standard for heart surgery, for example, although to their credit, cardio-thoracic surgeons are about the only ones doing widespread audit of their work.

A register was started for paediatric heart surgery in 1993, with risk-stratified audit which allows comparison between units. But it wasn't compulsory and has remained anonymous, despite the fact that in 1993 leading lights in the specialty knew what was happening in Bristol. Ironically, or rather out of necessity, the Bristol unit has been the first to go public, floating its results on the internet and proving itself to be one of the best in the UK.

However, even when standards are set, audit is done and recommendations based on the audit are handed down by royal colleges or professional associations, no one seems to have the teeth to stop poor performers. Hence recommendations that biliary surgery and cleft palate repair in children should be limited to a few specialist centres have fallen on deaf ears, with district general hospital managers preferring to keep treatment cheaply in house and non-specialist doctors arrogant enough to think they can do as good a job as the specialists. For simple operations they may do better, but not for anything that requires a highly trained, specialist team.

Prof Karl Sikora of Hammersmith Hospital believes 15,000 cancer patients die unnecessarily each year because they aren't treated in specialist centres. Despite the Calman recommendations ordering a reorganisation of cancer care in 1996, the improvements have been blighted by "insufficient funds, inappropriate management and doctors refusing to change".

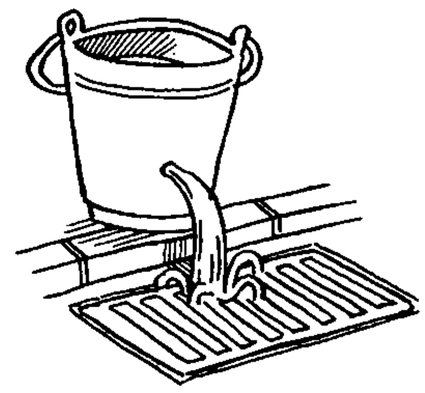
The latest audit that has failed to deliver improvements comes from the Royal College of Psychiatrists. They looked at the provision in England and Wales of electroconvulsive therapy, an effective treatment used for intractable depression when other methods have failed. Despite two previous audits (the last in 1991) and clear royal college standards, only a third of clinics met them in 1996 when the audit finished. Only 16 percent of consultants were able to attend ECT sessions and supervise their juniors, 41 percent had outdated machines and two thirds had no clear policies to help guide juniors to administer ECT effectively.

In Scotland, however, junior staff receive excellent training, the consultants are present at ECT sessions, EEG (brain wave) monitoring with modern equipment is freely available and an audit of outcomes has revealed that more than 70 percent of patients improve after ECT.

A Scottish audit of infertility treatment was far less favourable, however.

So what is Mr Dobson to do — particularly about doctors who ignore audits and guidelines? When M.D. met him at an NHS 50th anniversary "celebration", he was trying to pin down a surgeon in middle-England called The Terminator. Despite the track record the nickname suggests, it is very hard to gather firm evidence against him because... he doesn't audit his work.

M.D.



WATERWORLD

YORKSHIRE Water and its fat cat bosses are still taking millions of gallons of water from local rivers even though the much-publicised drought ended three years ago.

Conservationists are concerned that the company is seeking to renew emergency abstraction licences for three rivers where wildlife has suffered because of the huge amounts of water removed.

However, the company — which last month announced half-yearly profits of £118m — seems to be losing interest in the notion of supplying water at all. Chief executive Kevin Bond says that by the year 2005 he would like to see half the company's turnover coming from non-water activities such as property speculation and waste disposal (coincidentally, areas free of even the mildest of interference from the regulator Ofwat).

Meanwhile, speculation grows that Yorkshire directors plan a sell-off to enable them to take the money and run before the next drought.

HARD CHOICES
5
Number of murders committed by asylum seekers for which the Daily Mail believes they should all be sent back
130,000
Number of murders and tortures committed by General Pinochet despite which the Daily Mail belives he should be sent back
FOREIGNERS

SIGNAL FAILURES

Happy Christmess from Railtrack

THE season of goodwill to all shareholders is approaching and as usual passengers are expected to give generously of their time, patience and money. Christmas, you see, is traditionally seen by the rail industry as open season for messing passengers about.

As well as the almost total suspension of services for two days, this year unprecedented hurdles are being placed in the path of passengers.

Last month rail regulator John Swift belatedly realised rail companies had not complied with their obligation to publish Christmas timetables at least 12 weeks ahead. He said: "The position has now been reached where, on many routes, customers cannot reliably plan or book their travel arrangements over Christmas and New Year." (As punishment the companies had to give the fearsome regulator "a report".)

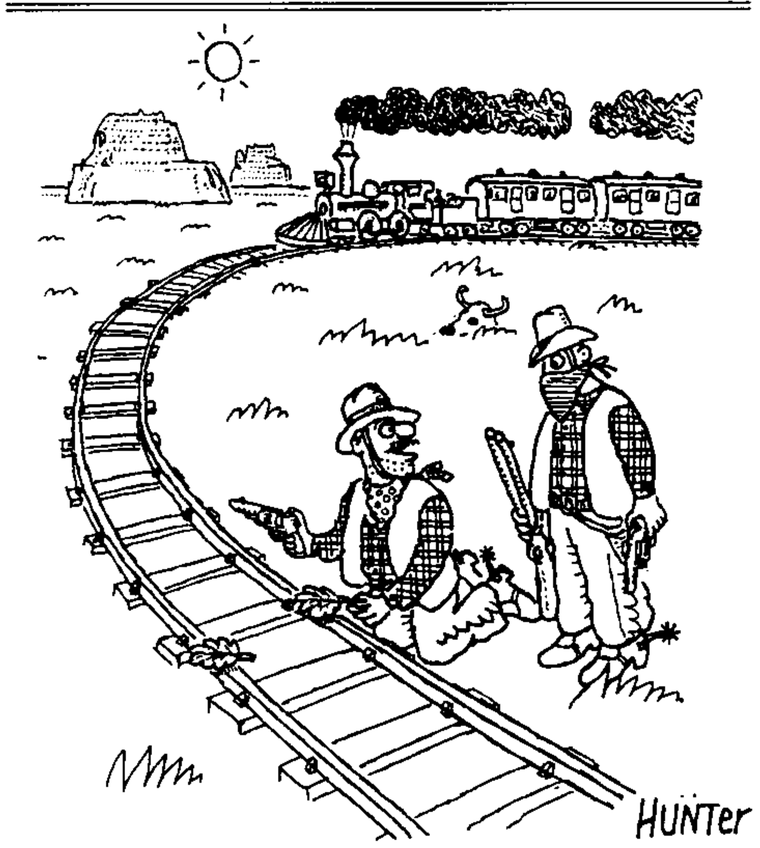
Railtrack said the situation was "due to the very intensive programme of heavy engineering work planned over Christmas". That programme will disrupt many journeys — but at the same time long-distance fares will be *increased*. From 18 December to 1 January there will be no supersaver tickets. Passengers will have to buy more expensive saver fares, even for journeys that involve switching from trains to buses at Railtrack's convenience.

Railtrack has chosen to work at the giant Manchester Piccadilly station on 19 and 20 December, ensuring the station is closed for one of the busiest weekends of the year. Travellers from the south, many laden with luggage and presents, will switch to buses at Stockport and arrive in Manchester much later than normal. Passengers travelling from Birmingham to Manchester, for example, will be caught up in this hassle and have to pay £26.10 instead of the usual £19.50 for the privilege. The buses will be laid on by North Western Trains, so connections with Virgin services may not be guaranteed (as when buses were provided for rail passengers between Wilmslow and Stockport recently).

Railtrack is causing more and more disruption to passengers during the year while information becomes harder to find. There are now no weekend timetables in the official guide to InterCity services, which itself is becoming harder to obtain. Yet the rail industry is making unprecedented use of computers and information technology capable of planning train timetables and dispersing information rapidly at the press of a few buttons.

Railtrack and its contractors are improving engineering productivity by investing in new machinery which works faster and needs fewer operators. This has already helped drive down operating costs (by 4 percent in the first half of this year). Passengers might expect to benefit from these efficiencies through less disruption to journeys from engineering work and clearer information being provided further in advance. But that would be a selfish assumption, especially at Christmas when everyone should remember the poor and needy — like Railtrack shareholders and directors who have to make do with six-month profits rising by a not very Scrooge-like 13 percent to £224m and dividends up by 10 percent. Bah humbug indeed!

'Dr B. Ching'



"Trust me, amigo — it's a little trick I learned in England"

DOWN ON THE FARM

ON the general glee at the leaked letters from pollster Stan Greenberg to his client Monsanto (detailing the collapse of the biotech giant's public credibility in Britain and Germany), one aspect has been overlooked: the reaction of the "political elite" to Monsatan's ad campaign.

Aimed at gullible dimwits from the chattering classes, the ABs actually came away with some credit: they were apparently unmoved by the Monsatan drivel. However, based on interviews with just 14 MPs and civil servants, of whom 11 had actually read the adverts, Greenberg claims it was "hard not to be impressed with the apparent impact of the advertising on the political elite audience".

And what did the "top people" learn? That "GM [*genetic modification*] is very little different from plant breeding and that was no harm." "Monsanto thinks they are safe and it is supported by the regulatory authorities in developed countries." "Basically it's a natural process." Oh dear. It is worrying to find that even some our rulers regard adverts in the colour supplements as a source of serious information.

'Gumboot'

Rotten Boroughs

Operation Care

LAMBETH council is embroiled in a child abuse scandal with chilling similarities to the Mark Trotter paedophile affair in Hackney. The south London borough is belatedly trying to trace thousands of youngsters who, it fears, might have been abused by a council employee while in council care.

The panic follows the death from Aids of Steven Forrest, deputy manager of Angell Road children's home in Brixton from 1983 until 1992. After Forrest's death a boy who had been in care alleged that the deputy manager had buggered him in 1988, when he was only six years old.

The family of the boy complained to Lambeth. Although the council knew that Forrest had died of Aids, it decided not to tell the boy's family until September of this year when the victim was finally interviewed. Why the council hid the cause of Forrest's death from the family for so long is unclear.

In a separate case, Forrest's boss at the Angell home, John Carroll, faces 96 charges of buggery and indecent assault of children over a 20-year period — 26 of the charges relating to his time in Lambeth. The charges follow Merseyside police's wide-ranging Operation Care, the investigation that followed the North Wales child abuse inquiry.

As Operation Care has progressed officers have found that much valuable information has been destroyed. Papers relating to another former Lambeth council employee, Leslie Paul, who was a residential children's home worker, have apparently been incinerated. Paul was sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment in 1994 after he was found guilty of abusing boys in his care at two Lambeth homes.

Shetland

NICK REITER, former head of policy at Westminster during the Dame Shirley Porter "homes for votes" scandal, is being investigated by the Shetland Islands council of which he is chief executive.

The problem seems to be that when he was shortlisted for the job in March he unaccountably forgot to detail his key role at Westminster during Porter's reign in the 1980s, which ended in her being found liable for a £27m surcharge for "gerrymandering" and "wilful misconduct".

It appears SIC convener Canon Lewis Smith only recently read the Westminster report, which was published in May 1996. So shocked was he that he asked consultant Ken Mackay, former head of local government finance at the Scottish office, to investigate Mr Reiter's past. Mr Reiter has been on gardening leave for six weeks while Mr Mackay mulls over the evidence.

Salford

***OH what a tangled web we weave...* when we start making secret tape recordings of our fellow Labour councillors.**

Fifty Salford councillors were recently poised to listen to secret tapes of conversations recorded by Labour activist Hilary Peat featuring Walkden North ward councillor Melvyn Higson. Hilary claims that Melvyn ran a hate campaign against her. But Melvyn, who is married with three children, resigned his seat before fellow members could hear the tapes — or investigate a separate claim that he had stalked Labour councillor Liz Payne. Melvyn says he had a two-year affair with Liz, but Liz denies this.

On the tapes Higson is heard suggesting that rival councillors, particularly council leader John Merry, wanted to blacken his name because of his ambition to take over Worsley MP Terry Lewis's seat at the next election. He thinks Merry has the same idea.

Payne, meanwhile, has alleged that Higson followed her car to Merry's home and then got someone to phone Leigh MP Lawrence Cunningham, with whom she had had a long-term relationship, to let him know where she was. Regional party bosses will have a lot of fun sorting out this tangled web of romance and intrigue next year.

Leicester

WELCOME to Leicester — the city which spent millions on becoming a unitary authority last year, since when, according to a Mori poll, the council's popularity has fallen by 20 percent and the city seems determined to win the prize for municipal cock-ups.

There was, for example, the security blunder which allowed vandals to burn down the city's main bonfire display a day early, and the planning cock-up which allowed Morrison's to win planning permission for a superstore a quarter of a mile from a brand new Safeway. The council is bracing itself for a costly court challenge from Safeway.

Another reason for the fall in popularity may be the council's insensitivity. It agreed to pay £2m to the National Space Science Centre planned for the city, while telling crumbling schools it did not have enough cash for repairs. It also frittered away a £3.7m underspend it discovered months after making "unavoidable" cuts to training centres.

Then there is Leicester's political infighting. Labour leader Peter Soulsby has enraged colleagues in Leicester East and Leicester South by urging the regional party to investigate selection procedures in two of their wards, West Humberstone and Stoneygate. His intervention, it seems, has little to do with next May's city elections and everything to do with the Labour group agm which follows soon afterwards. Soulsby knows he will lose his leadership if too many of his supporters are deselected.

Bury

BURY council, famous for losing £6m in the BCCI collapse, still hasn't sorted out its finances or its priorities, it seems.

When 78-year-old May Sharples suffered serious burns from a radiator after falling out of bed in a council-run old people's home, the health and safety executive (HSE) said the 78°C water was hot enough to burn through a person's skin in less than two minutes.

Chief social services officer Jim Wilson showed the usual level of concern for which the council is noted — he blamed "vicious cash cuts" during the early 90s (when Bury failed to read the warning signs about the dodgy BCCI). But the HSE, which prosecuted the council, was unimpressed. It had already given the council two written warnings about supervision. The council was fined £7,500 plus £2,000 costs.

Meanwhile council leader Derek Boden is trying to raise £2m for a sailing ship to take a party of local kids to the US to mark the millennium in honour of a Bury man who settled there 200 years ago. One council officer has already been over at taxpayers' expense to prepare for the great shindig.

Pseuds Corner

And then there was my latest experience: an impassioned snog with the restaurant critic of this very magazine. Yes, Meades and I locked on to one another like eels mating in the Sargasso Sea. I can't remember who suggested it, but once we'd docked I was surprised by the immense size and power of his lingual apparatus. It reminded me insistently of Stephen Jay Gould's essay on the *Flamingo's Smile*, in which he points out that the reason flamingos' tongues were such a delicacy in ancient Rome was that unlike other birds' tongues, they are designed to effect the continuous, vigorous pumping action required to sluice up vast amounts of nutriments, and are thus immensely big and thick.

WILL SELF
The Times Magazine

Perhaps it is too early to say, perhaps we are getting carried away in our paeans to [John] Gregory, but it also appeared on Saturday as though the purchase of [Dion] Dublin had solved an age-old conundrum that has been as maddeningly insoluble for football pundits as the Schleswig-Holstein question was for late 19th century politicians.

The quest to get the best out of Stan Collymore seems to have driven some managers to the brink of insanity, but Gregory is already close to achieving it already.

OLIVER HOLT
The Times

Our kitchens are full of the ghosts of people who have stood as we do, stirring, simmering and

spicing, as we do. You hear them in the whistle of a kettle, the sound of a broom sweeping the floor. And every time you pick up a wooden spoon, you become part of a continuous human flow, at one with the residual wisdom that is generations old. This is why we should be looking for new ways with old recipes, so that our kitchen heritage stays with us. And in time, we will become the ghosts of future kitchens, guiding the hands of others.

JILL DUPLEIX
Independent on Sunday

Loved *is in its own way quietly ground breaking. It's about the kind of unconditional love that can be violent and brutal. It supports the belief that if you are in a relationship and somebody hits you, you are not a victim. It is simply a result of that love. In fact, it may be a manifestation of that kind of love, a kind of transubstantiation, because if you hit someone you go beyond their skin and inside them.*

CHRISSY ILEY
Sunday Times Magazine

Inner tranquillity
Chester Odendaal is a Golden Age Reiki master: "The Lightbody essences really excite me. They clear the emotional and mental body. I think all the presents are useful, practical for the fourth and fifth dimensions. It would be wonderful to have a Tiffany emerald crystal. Emeralds resonate and activate the higher heart, which helps to connect to the divine. They were implanted on earth by the Hathors, Christ-conscious beings from Venus. The best present I have ever had is the help and support on my spiritual path from Mel, Shimara Kumara, the Ascended Masters and Angels and Archangels."

E.S. Magazine

CONTRIBUTORS: Michael Carlson, Guy Croton, Helen Roach, R. Manton, APR.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Tory story

Sir,

I do so agree with your correspondents criticising you for your exposure of the Ron Davies affair.

It is of course entirely wrong that you should ever treat someone of his political background in this way — such wonderful people should be fully protected from any such disparagement.

You should, of course, always observe the current popular maxim "it is only sleaze when it is a Tory".

Yours faithfully,
RODNEY BENNETT,

Richmond, Surrey.

Gee spot

Sir,

I normally read your Rotten Boroughs column with great interest and pleasure. However, having featured in the piece on the defunct London Organised Fraud Investigation Team (13 Nov), I must make the following points:

- *I was employed as a consultant by the Association of London Government (ALG) for eight weeks between July and September 1996 to undertake some early preparatory work alongside others in the ALG; subsequently, I had no involvement in the running of the Team;*
- *In fact I have had a quite different job for the last two years, setting up and running the corporate anti-fraud team in the London borough of Lambeth, which has saved Lambeth council taxpayers tens of millions of pounds.*
- *Recent reports by both the Audit Commission and Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, while criticising the management of the team, attributed no blame whatsoever to those involved in the preparatory work.*

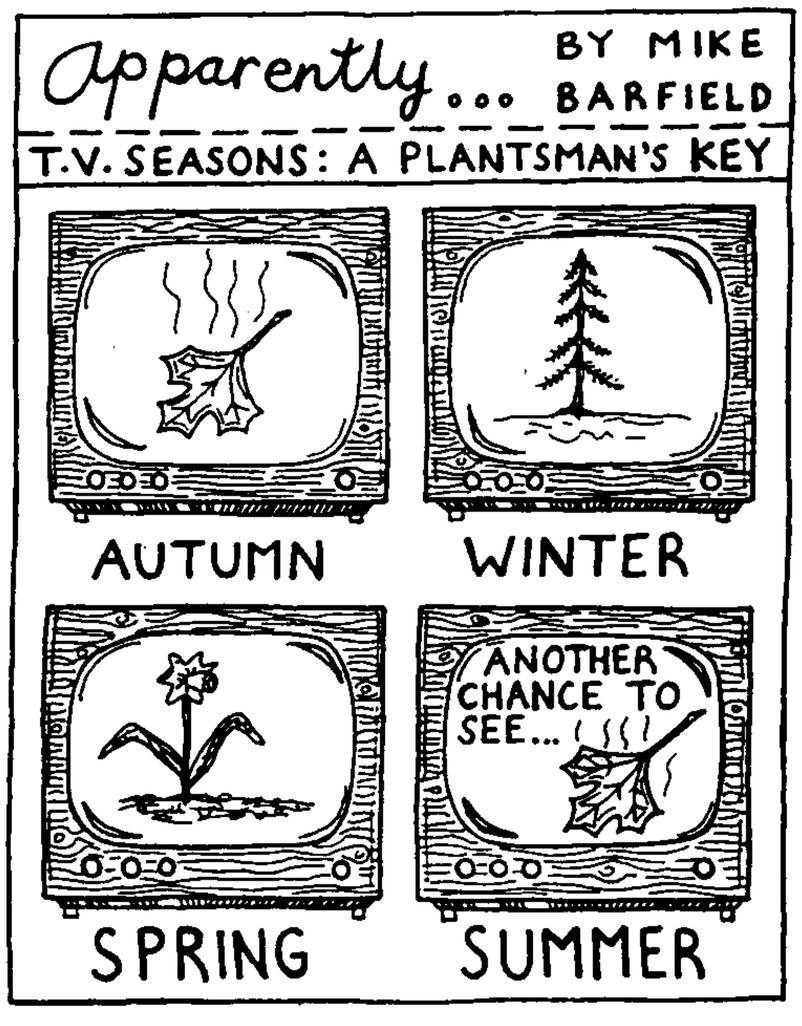
I must also make the following correction:

- *The "business plan" which you mention in fact referred to possible savings of £1.5m from year 2 (not as you state "for each year"); this conservative figure actually equates to £100,000 savings for each of LOFIT's 15 investigators — considerably less than the average figure expected from each Benefits Agency fraud officer.*

It is very important that stories concerning those of us trying to tackle corruption are wholly accurate, because the job is quite tough enough anyway. The exposure of malpractice and corruption is an essential part of your magazine and I remain, despite the above complaint, a regular reader.

Yours sincerely,
JIM GEE,

Via fax.



O·B·N

"Behold the fragrant Glenys Kinnock... here is a woman who could do for Wales what President Mary Robinson did for Ireland: replace the stereotype of the mediocre men in suits with a queenly virtue, a feminine intelligence and a sufficiency of glamour to warrant constant appearances in *Hello!* magazine."

MARY KENNY
The Express

Jenkin's 'ere?

Sir,

The report in HP Sauce (EYE 960) about the absence of North Essex Tory MP Bernard Jenkin from the emergency recall of parliament in September, in order that he could attend a party fund-raising dinner in his constituency where the guest speaker was Lord Archer, reminds me of the last time MPs were called back during recess.

Three years ago parliament reassembled to discuss sending British soldiers to Bosnia. Although his then constituency included much of Colchester Garrison, Mr Jenkin chose not to cut short his holiday in Scotland.

It's good to see that he continues to get his priorities right and does not allow his duties as an MP to disrupt his social life.

Yours faithfully,
MABON DANE,

Colchester.

Carol singing

Sir,

Re: Hackwatch — Garry Bushell. I was very interested to read the Hackwatch article on my estranged husband Garry Bushell. I heartily agree with all you said. What you omitted to mention was that he not only promotes himself, but also the person he now lives with, Tania Ashbee. She appears in all his "shows" and is frequently pictured with him in his article.

It is also interesting that whilst the SUN is eager to print the extra-marital affairs of other celebrities it has made no mention that Garry Bushell left his wife and three children after 22 years of marriage for a peroxide blonde "wannabe" New Country singer, young enough to be his daughter.

Yours sincerely,
CAROL BUSHELL,

London SE9.

Sun stroke

Sir,

Thanks for the plugs. Any chance of mentioning the panto?

Best wishes,
GARRY BUSHELL,

The Sun.

No. Ed.

Woollen thinking

Sir,

As you can imagine, pullovers have been tugged nervously at Virgin Direct since we read Slicker's coruscating examination of our "unannounced" accounts.

We've decided to come clean. Virgin Direct isn't making a profit. We never expected to at this stage. Traditional financial services providers make money very quickly because they load all their charges up front and then forget about the customer. Virgin Direct makes money more slowly by spreading charges over the lifetime of the product and looking after our customers.

I apologise to Slicker, who is clearly a fan of short-termism and phenomenally dull financial accounts (at least it proves he really does work in the City). I promise we will press release Slicker every time we buy new office furniture or order supplies for the coffee machine.

Oh, and be sure to give my regards to your friends the pension mis-sellers — I hear they turned in a very healthy set of accounts this year.

Yours sincerely,
ROWAN GORMLEY,
Virgin Direct Personal Financial Service Ltd.

Christmas tip

Sir,

It just occurred to me as I finished reading the letters page... it is always best to skip the letters from people who include their job title in the signature...

DAVID
(Bad Musician),

Via e-mail.

LUVVIES

Actress Fay Ripley says she so convinced herself of the labour scene in the first episode of the series [*Cold Feet*] that she wondered where her baby was when she got home from the studio.

Radio Times

Submitted by John Harries.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Lookalike

Nicky

Polly

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the similarity between "in yer face" hairdresser Nicky Clarke and "wine in yer face" journalist Polly Toynbee?

Yours faithfully,
VALERIE ELSON,

Prescot, Merseyside.

Just a Mo

Sir,

So, comparing a woman who has lost her hair and gained weight as a result of cancer treatment, to a fat bald bloke, counts as satire these days, does it? (Lookalike, EYE 964).

I think not.

KATE OWEN,

Via e-mail.

I-SPY

Glasgow
(submitted by A&B Parker)

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Agri-vation

Sir,

It's a pity what while PRIVATE EYE does an excellent job in exposing corruption in many areas, it always seems to knuckle down to the muck-encrusted agricultural lobby.

The figures quoted in Hard Choices (27 November) amount to misrepresentation. The vast costs of the BSE disaster (caused by the farmers' own practices) have been borne by the taxpayer in the main, so adding insult to injury.

And who is so far behind the times that they refer to the fox as the "farmer's worst enemy" on the JUST FANCY THAT! page? Don't they know that even the unspeakable MAFF doesn't class the fox as an agricultural pest (because it isn't one)?

Do stop talking through your tweed hats.

Yours faithfully,
FAY MARSHALL,
Worthing, West Sussex.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, here are some of the designs we didn't use..."

Not Peter's friend?

Sir,

I can understand how upset Peter Mandelson must be at being thought to be gay.

The gays I know are witty, amusing, generous, sensitive, warm-hearted, perceptive, humorous, understanding, good-looking and well rounded human beings who are a great pleasure to be with.

These are behaviour patterns that Mr M has struggled manfully to avoid all his life, and with which he has certainly shown absolutely no desire to be associated.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN BASSETT,
London NW3.

Animated

Sir,

Re: Square Eyes' potted history of animation (EYE 964). At the risk of seeming pedantic, FRITZ THE CAT could be attributed to Robert Crumb (cartoonist and creator) or Ralph Bakshi (cinematic animator), but not to Bob Godfrey; whilst undeniably wobbly and definitively sarcastic, Bob Godfrey's Custard the Cat, nemesis of the eponymous Roobarb, couldn't be described with any accuracy as "X-rated".

Tends to undermine Square Eyes' authority on this subject, I'm afraid.

Warm regards,
STEVE MOTT,

Via E-mail.

● ***Thanks to the several thousand other readers who also wrote in to correct Square Eyes' error. May the drawstrings on your high-performance anoraks never get tangled...***

Letter of the weak

Sir,

During the many years on my postal round I have found that PRIVATE EYE subscribers are generally among the most spiteful, petty-minded complainers and the meanest tippers come Christmas time. Why should that be and is it so in other areas of the United Kingdom? Or is it just because they are all middle class with no bloody manners?

Yours faithfully,
MR POSTIE,

Belfast 4.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"A jockey without a whip is like a carpenter without a spanner."
FRANKIE DETTORI, Radio 5 Live
(A. Mac)

"I don't normally do requests, unless I'm asked to."
RICHARD WHITELEY, Channel 4
(Phil Rowley)

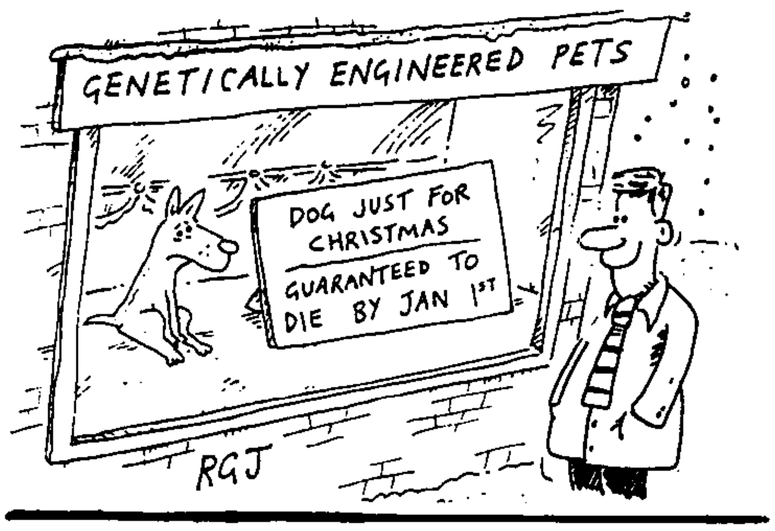
"There's Victor Fernandez [Celta Vigo manager]... just like an orchestral conductor mustering his troops."
JOHN CHAMPION, BBC1
(Rob Tate)

Interviewee: *There's a plaque to commemorate the site where the first flying bomb landed during the war.*
John Waite: *And is the house still there?*
Interviewee: *Er, no!*
Radio 4
(Richard Royds)

"It's not what Ginola does when he's got the ball, it's what he doesn't do when he hasn't got it."
ANDY GRAY, Sky TV
(Paul Jones)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



Letter from **Cape Town**

from Our Own Correspondent

THESE days in South Africa, frankly the only haven where one can celebrate a decent white Christmas any more is dear old Cape Town — point of arrival for European colonists 346 years ago, now port of departure for hordes of terrified whites who are packing up daily and jumping ship.

By the year 2000, it is said, there will be more South African doctors practising in California than Cape Town. In England, a quarter of a million pale South Africans have sought "pigment asylum"; at this rate, the white man's burden may soon be a thing of the past. Agh shame, as we say here.

Still, Xmas is always encouraging as there's a big influx of pink tourists to flesh out the numbers. Many are English: the sort of international white trash that simply transposes itself from Nigel Pratt-Dumpster's *Daily Mail* gossip column to the beaches of Clifton and Camps Bay, where you can hear 'em braying about how many zillions of rand they get to the pound.

Even Jeffrey Archer is threatening to spend Xmas here, writing his new collection of short stories. But then we colonials rate "Mayor" Jeffrey almost on a par with our own great Wilbur Smith, at the top of the modern literary pantheon.

Welcoming distinguished Brits — like Mark Thatcher and Earl Spencer — is part of our drive to sustain decent European standards in the dark continent. Increasingly, as the rest of South Africa is taken over by "affirmatives" (as we politely call our black chums these days), white folk from J'burg, who can't afford the "chicken run" abroad, are retreating to Cape Town.

Here we cling precariously to the southern tip of the continent, the last bastion of white, "western" civilisation in Africa. We can flee no further south. Next stop, Antarctica.

Thus there's a certain *fin de siècle* — let alone *fin de civilisation* — desperation. We, too, have the Proms — but *every* night is billed as "Last Night at the Proms". And while whites whine about corruption under Madiba (as we fondly call Mandela, to show how we all fought apartheid), most of us are on the take. For example, our local dentist, almost the last who hasn't decamped to Australia, accepts payment in cash, no receipt given.

Maggie's boy, Mark, needless to say, fits in snugly. He has a vast *hacienda* in costly Constantia, where the guest cottage is bigger than 10 Downing Street. His huge perimeter wall is several inches higher than zoning laws permit. At the entrance is a guard house with two armed gorillas on 24-hour alert.

No one knows, or cares, how Marky makes his millions. Hey, the boy loves his mum and she's still revered as a goddess here. All over Mark's home are huge framed portraits: Lady Thatcher with Reagan, Lady T with heads of state. There's even one photo of Mark's wife Diane — alongside his mother.

Father Christmas came for Mark several years ago when he was allowed in, against regulations — he had criminal proceedings pending in the States. Still, all rules were ducked recently to accommodate the president's Chinese acupuncturist. Who cares so long as the needles keep our very own Santa Claus Ho Ho Ho-ing?

December, of course, is quite the wrong month to celebrate Yuletide here. The more discerning locals do so in July when it's wet and gloomy, so the plastic mistletoe and Xmas pud are more festive than sweating it out by the pool. Will there be many more white Christmases? Put it this way: those taking the "chicken run" — mostly liberal, English-speaking professionals — are said not to have been able to stand two things about South Africa: apartheid... and the blacks.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

● **"NOMADS' GOALBOY SHITS ON FIELD. Mighty Telecom Wanderers' goalboy Valesi Mizere surprised the whole Chichiri Stadium on Saturday when he shatted on the pitch during the Chombe Tea Cup knockout match against the Lakeside giants Dwasco. With 20 minutes to full time, Mizere suddenly felt diarrhoea when he grabbed the ball. Before he collected himself, Mizere had shitties all over his pants. The referee had to stop the match as team doctor rushed inside to assist the beleaguered goalboy.**

"But Wanderers officials yesterday denied that Mizere really shatted on the ground. 'Actually the goalkeeper felt some stomach ache so he requested the doctor to check on him,' said team manager Makande. But this blue-eyed reporter saw with his naked eyes the greenish shits which the goalkeeper had discharged. Some critics feel that Dwasco had some juju which made Mizere to shit. It is understood that in their past games, Dwasco has been using the same magic to beat Wanderers. This is food for thought for Bata Bullets who are meeting the sugarmen in the finals this weekend. They should make everything possible that their shortsighted goalboy, Navigator Dzinkambani, should not suffer from shits and stomach ache, as was the case last Saturday." *(National Agenda [Malawi], 2/11/98. Spotter "Hawkeye")*

—●—

● "At approximately 9:30am on October 8th, shortly after I finish lunging at dogs, I will proceed to the front steps of the Simmons building at 2600 Kenilworth Avenue and yell loudly for nine hours," Dennis Fife told a specially-convened press conference in Alhambra, California. "The screaming will be broken by a fifteen-minute fit of rigid catatonia, most likely in the late afternoon."

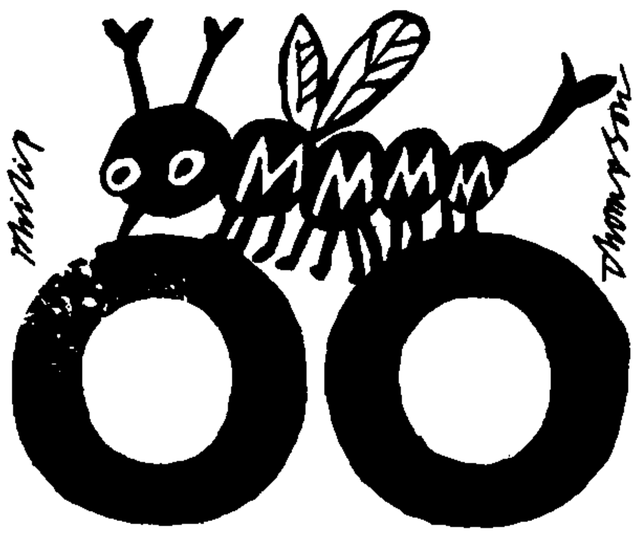
Fife, a 47-year-old unemployed yeller, gave further details of his proposal, in response to reporters' questions. "I may briefly stray from my agenda to urinate in the revolving door at the building's entrance but, for the most part, I will focus on the task at hand and spend the bulk of the day yelling at various passing cars. A lot of what I yell will be pre-planned, it will be things I've shouted at cars before, topics such as Bookshelves, Those Goddamn Bananas, The Man Trying to Kill Me, Closed-up Straws, Trapper John MD, and Papers Papers Everywhere. But I definitely want to leave open some room for improvisation. For instance, if a red car passes by, I might be inclined to shout at the driver 'where d'you get the fancy red car you a'hole?' But then, if another red car drives by a bit later, I might become angry and demand that the driver stop and give me kidney beans and a lick of his nipple.

"I've already begun preparations for the event. On Monday, I worked late into the night making a bowl of Kraft macaroni and cheese, which I shall bring with me and throw into the street, handfuls at a time. I've also set aside my lucky rubberband and a tree branch for the occasion. I'm liable to shout at any vehicle that goes down Kenilworth Avenue, but I'll focus primarily on Volkswagen Beetles, pick-up trucks, and late 80s Mitsubishi Galants. I shall also attempt to gain the attention of cyclists by shouting 'Hey there, Mr Bike-man'."

Although Fife vowed to remain in the office building's doorway throughout his nine-hour yell session, some observers speculated that he would wander over to the nearest corner, where he would have access to vehicles slowing down to make the turn into Canyon Drive. *(Alhambra Courier, 2/10/98. Spotter: Gerald Simonds)*

—●—

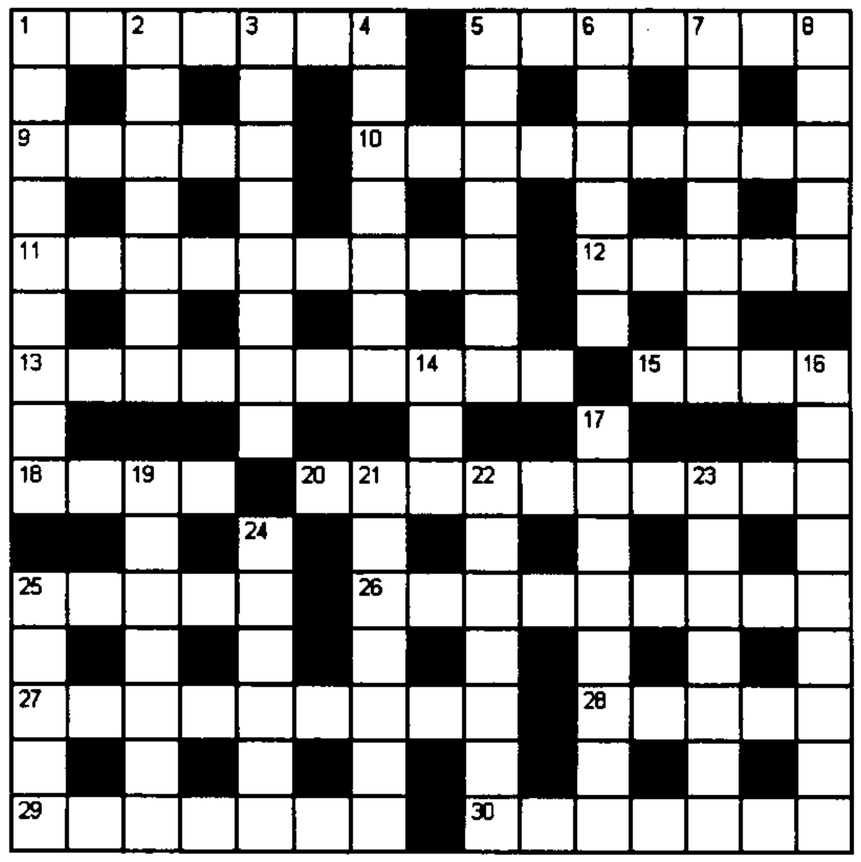
● *"The government has at last formed a committee to investigate problems that may be caused to Kenya's computer systems by the*



so-called millennium bug," Nairobi's The Daily Nation told its readers. "The committee was formed on October 19th, and has already decided that its final report on the consequences of the millennium bug will be published in 18 months time. The deadline for the report has therefore been fixed by the committee at April 2000, four months after the bug will have taken effect." (Daily Nation [Kenya], 2/11/98. Spotter: James Donaldson)

EYE CROSSWORD 120

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1/12 Mobster's gun reportedly carried by the sod making a call for global harmony (5,2,5)
5 Paula Yates's marks for soldiers' performances? (7)
9 Blast Tony, say? (5)
10 Freer, old-style politician: "Brenda has one by flipping balls" (9)
11/18 Archer's is most stupid bloomer of the season (9,4)
12 (see 1 ac.)
13 Shot of Naomi in tum surgery (10)
15/6 Fare on Boxing Day horrifies trippers (4,6)
18 (see 11)
20 PM's lies about restricting agents — something he's practised in (10)
25 Royal favourite inspiring lecherous outburst by George I (5)
26 Greer's associated with Phil's circle *(Rubbish — see me. Ed)* (3,6)
27 Traditional Xmas fare on stage for the advancement of the Nazi (5-4)
28 (see 24)
29 Crumbling respect held by Brenda (7)
30 Appropriate, Tony's opening hospital — what a bomber (7)

DOWN

1 A short and curly presiding officer pursuing local interest (5,4)
2 Word confused with 'Harry penetrating a sheep' (7)
3 Regular lay taken by The Vicar? (8)
4 New fancy limo and sex without restriction ... (2,5)
5 ... Bill, like, getting a little firm — sauce! (7)
6 (see 15)
7 Iran too 'foreign' for this provincial place? (7)
8 Fergie's first rash move: accepting head from accountant (5)
14 The president's in furniture store getting end away (3)
16 Did he come to be lying in this? (4,5)
17 For those who play with themselves — cool! (8)
19 He found the right Xmas spirit: "Score and go get pissed!" (7)
21 Her hubby tense when Brenda turns up with love potion? (7)
22 Parrot in tins makes savoury snacks (7)
23 Criminal in Pentonville gallery (7)
24/28 Carol's mum getting thing out (6,5)
25 Conservative leader's talk brings tears to the eyes! (2,3)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 17.12.98. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

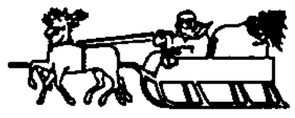
Solution to Crossword No. 119

Winner: BARRY TINNISWOOD

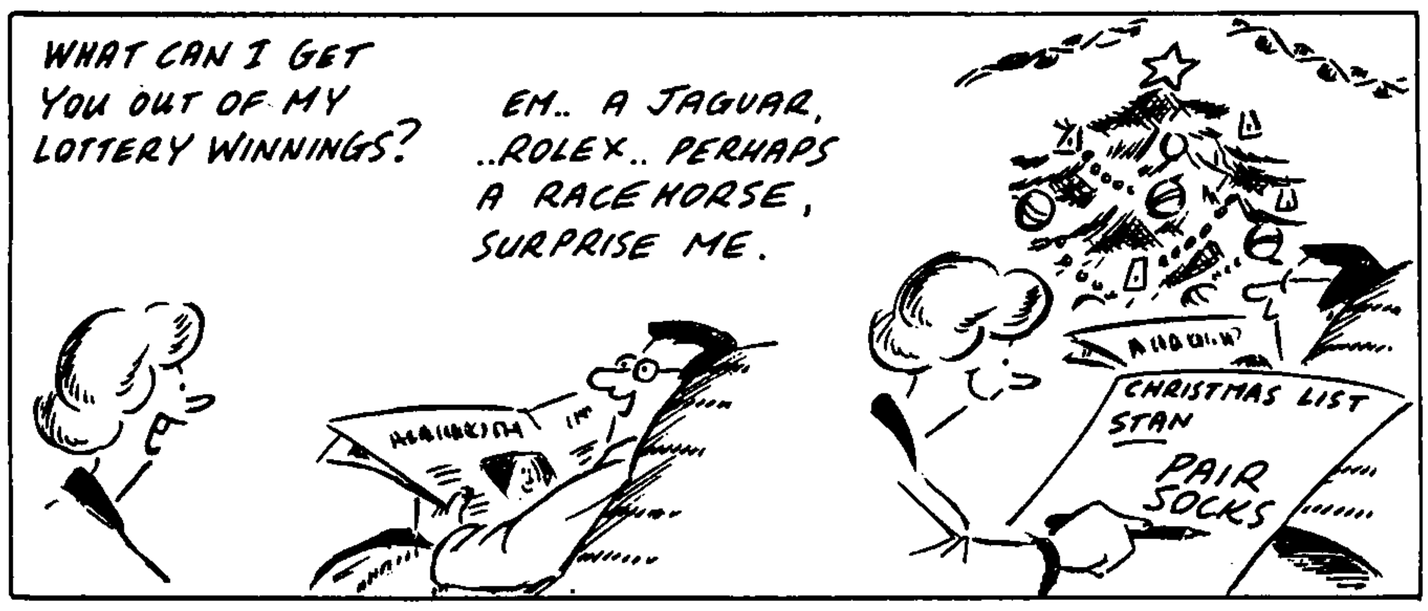
ACROSS: 1 Scene 4 Analgesic 9/2/26 A grievous error of judgement 10 Realm 11 Torches 12 Riddled 13 Infidel 14 Nureyev 16 (see 7) 19 Scoffed 21 Digests 23 Average 25 Obese 26 (see 9) 27 Mass lobby 28 Toper.

DOWN: 1 Shaft 2 (see 9) 3 Eye shadow 4 Arousal 5 Also-ran 6 Gored 7/16 Stanley Baldwin 8 Camp David 13 In bad form 15 Roosevelt 17 Legless 18 Nose job 19 Stand by 20 Frame-up 22 Steel 24 Enter.

The Lottery Winners



TURNER


WHAT CAN I GET YOU OUT OF MY LOTTERY WINNINGS?
EM.. A JAGUAR, ..ROLEX.. PERHAPS A RACEHORSE, SURPRISE ME.
CHRISTMAS LIST
STAN
PAIR SOCKS

HAGUE PLAN TO "ABOLISH CONSERVATIVE PARTY"

by Our Parliamentary Staff **Boorish Johnson**

A BELEAGUERED Mr William Hague last night announced his own plans for constitutional reform.

"It is high time," he said, "that we dropped the anachronistic and undemocratic Conservative Party and replaced it with something more appropriate with the modern age."

Mr Hague shocked traditionalists by the boldness of this plan which he claimed would be very popular with the voters.

SQUITT THE YOUNGER

"For far too long Conservative MPs have just turned up to the House of Commons whenever they felt like it and voted on issues they know nothing about."

"Everyone knows," said the Leader of the Conservative Party, "that all my peers are useless and reform is long overdue."

Not all Conservative MPs however agreed to back the plan for their own abolition. Diehard backbencher Sir Bufton Tufton (Lymeswold) vowed to fight on.

"I have been turning up to the Commons for hundreds of years and I am not going to be told what to do by the democratically elected leader of the party."

SQUIT WHILE YOU ARE AHEAD

"No one is going to accuse me of being out of touch, least of all this jumped-up little Major chap."

Lord Cranborne is 189.

FAYED TO BUY PLAYHOUSE THEATRE SHOCK

by Our Theatre Critic **Ned Sheridan Morley-Means-Worsely**

THE Harrods supremo, Mr Mohamed Al Fayed, has sensationally stepped in to buy London's top ailing theatre, the Playhouse, in London's not-very-busy Charing Cross district. He has announced a major shake-up of the theatre's repertoire and the new season will include:

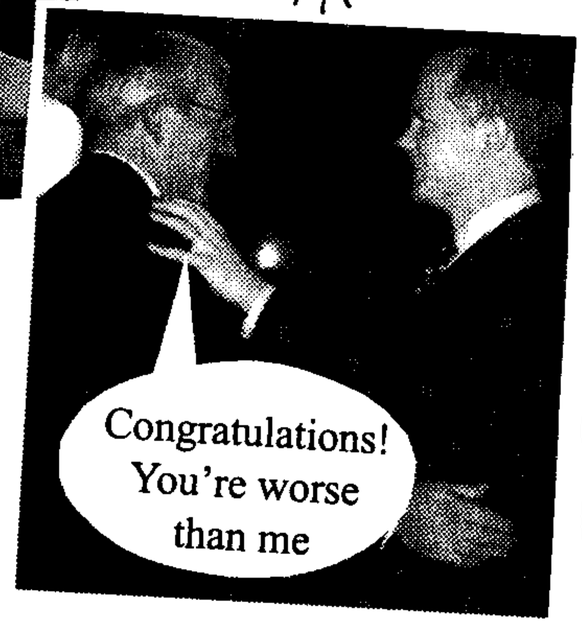
☺ December. Pantomime. **Ali Fayed and the Fuggin' Thieves.** Laughs galore as Ali breaks into the safety deposit boxes at Harrods with the magic words "Open fuggin' sesame".

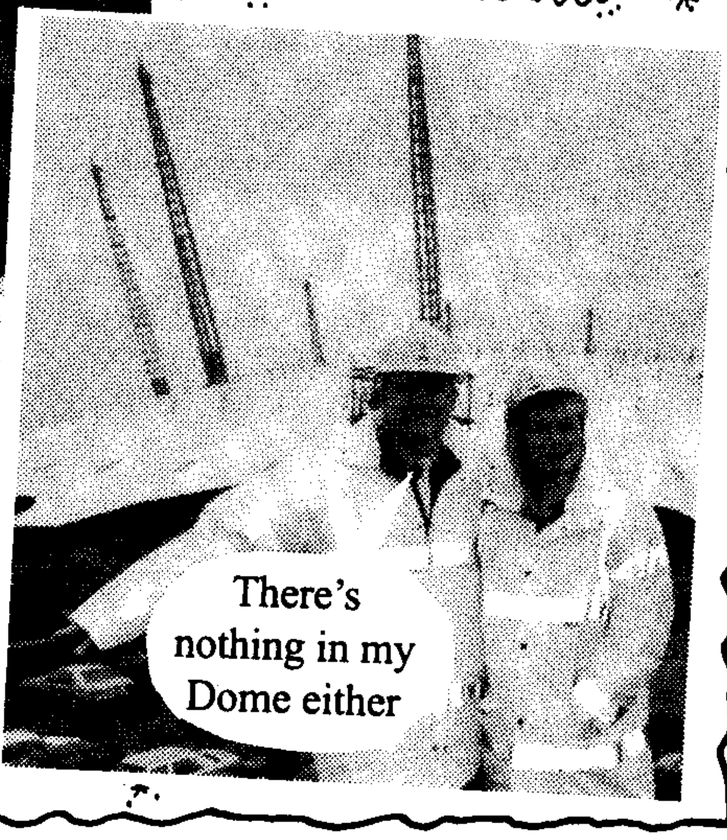
☺ January. **An Inspector Calls.** Trouble starts when Inspector Knacker of the Fraud Squad comes round to ask to look at Mr Fayed's books.

☺ February. **Loot.** Surreal farce involving diamonds, emeralds and brown paper envelopes full of money.

☺ March. **Give us a Fuggin' Passport To Pimlico.** Stage adaptation of classic Ealing comedy in which a Knightsbridge shopkeeper declares independence from the rest of the United Kingdom. *(That's enough plays. Ed.)*

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS CRACKUP JOKES!





TV Highlights

Countdown

Richard Witless *(for it is he)*: This week's contestant is Carol, who works as a TV star for Channel 4. Welcome, Carol!

Carol Phwoordeman: Hello.

Richard: Now, here are your numbers. Two, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero and zero. What's the biggest sum you can make out of them? We are starting the clock and you have exactly one year...

(Carol scratches head as lights flash and machine makes bubbly noise)

Carol: That's simple. I make it two million pounds.

Richard: Well done, Carol. Now will you explain how you arrived at that figure?

Carol: I haven't a clue. Maybe it's because I'm the only woman on television with any "A" levels!

(Studio audience applaud politely)

Announcer: Next tonight, Carol Vordeman's Mysterious Phenomenon — the extraordinary story of how an ordinary Channel Four presenter mesmerised TV executives who gave her two million pounds a year for no apparent reason.

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

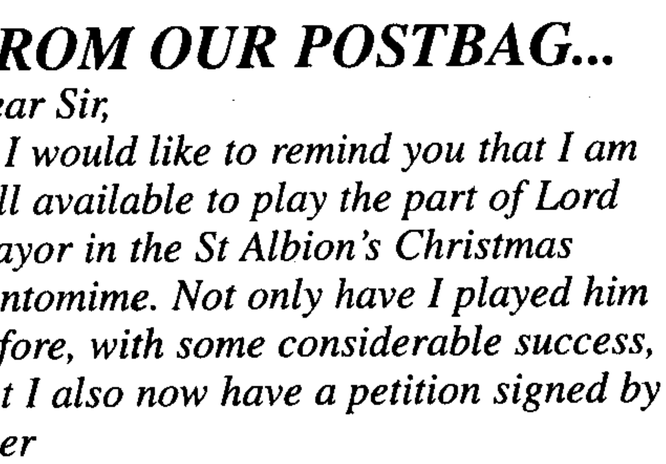
It's Advent again and, as you know, Advent is the time when we look forward, the time when we in the parish make plans for the year ahead. And, let's be honest, there isn't going to be time to do everything. Remember that passage from the Old Testament, "For every thing there is a season: but not for some things obviously." Those wonderful words from the Book of Elasticus *(7,11)*. As true today as they were when they were written all those millions of years ago!

Lots of you have put in some marvellous suggestions — Mr Prescott's idea for scrapping the church car park and building a cycle lane through the churchyard was terrific. But, apologies to John, that one will have to go on the back burner.

Look! It's all about what we've got time for. It's not about personalities. The fact that John told everyone in the Working Men's Club that my ideas about the Third Way are no good has got nothing to do with it! As I told John, there is the first way of doing things — My Way. The second way of doing things — His Way. And the third way of doing things. Which is the same as the First Way!

Anyway, Christmas will soon be upon us and its message is particularily relevant this year "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men". And that means our French friends, our Belgian friends, our Swedish friends and even our German friends!

I've recently been attending oecumenical meetings all over Europe and I tell you, it's pretty exciting to see all the old prejudices and divisions breaking down. And that's what one German pastor, Father Oskar said to me. "Tony," he said, "isn't it wunderbar?" (That means



"wonderful" in English, in case any of you were wondering.)

He said, "Tony, we are all one big, happy country, I mean family, now — and don't you forget it!"

I haven't forgotten it and I'd like you all to remember it this Christmas!

Cheers! Tony

FROM OUR POSTBAG...

Dear Sir,

I would like to remind you that I am still available to play the part of Lord Mayor in the St Albion's Christmas pantomime. Not only have I played him before, with some considerable success, but I also now have a petition signed by over

Yours sincerely,
Ken Livingstone,
The Aquatic Pet Centre,
"Newts R Us", The High Street.

The Editor reserves the right to cut all letters for reasons of space. A.C.

A Statement From Our Treasurer, Mr Brown

Certain people are putting it about that my assistant Mr Robinson is shortly to be relieved of his position, owing to various alleged 'irregularities' in his dealings with the Inland Revenue, the PCC, the late Robert Maxwell and his erstwhile Belgian lady friend Madame de Legovaire. I would like to make it clear that I have complete confidence in Geoffrey, whatever the Vicar, the Church-warden and the editor of this newsletter mayxcanabgncomptengobbledygookmosh

(A.C. writes: We apologise that, owing to the Millennium Bug, a number of items in the current newsletter may make no sense at all. Mr Brown's contribution in particular reads like gibberish. Sorry! Ed.)

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

As Christmas approaches, let us remember the true meaning of Christmas, which is for us all to go out and spend money in the High Street in order to support the economy at this difficult time. (Not that it is a difficult time, as Mr Brown the Treasurer always reminds us! T.B.)

To Remember In Your Prayers

Let us particularly remember this week a very unfortunate young man who has got into trouble with his elders and betters in a way which has left him looking rather foolish.

There is no need for me to embarrass him by mentioning his name, but I think we all know who young William Hague is.

● Let us remember those who have been given responsibilities that are far too much for them, and who may well shortly have to be replaced. Again, it would be wrong to single out individuals, particularly young William Hague. That would be most unfair!

● Finally, let us remember all those who suffer from premature hair loss, those who are afflicted with a funny voice, and those whose lives are made difficult by the fact that their girlfriends spell their name in a silly way. (Unlike Cherie! T. B.)

X X X X X THANKS X X X X X

● Our thanks to all the local businessmen like **Mr Murdoch**, from *Adult Mags and Vids Shop* in the High Street, who have given so generously to the Tent fund, with no thought of reward for themselves. So you won't hear the Vicar calling for Mr Murdoch's premises to be closed down! Also it seems that the owner of the very popular burger bar in the High Street, who wants to remain anonymous, has generously offered to provide all the catering for our millennium celebrations, for free. And all we have to do is to call it the Big Mac-llennium Tent (*No problem! T.B.)*

A Sinner Repenteth!

Our hearts were all warmed this week when our Parish solicitor, Mr Lairg, of Lairg, Over and Co., publicly confessed how guilty he felt about running off with the wife of another parishioner, i.e. Mrs Dewar. In a moving apology, he said, "It was just one of those things. And it was all a long time ago. I don't know why everyone keeps going on about it."

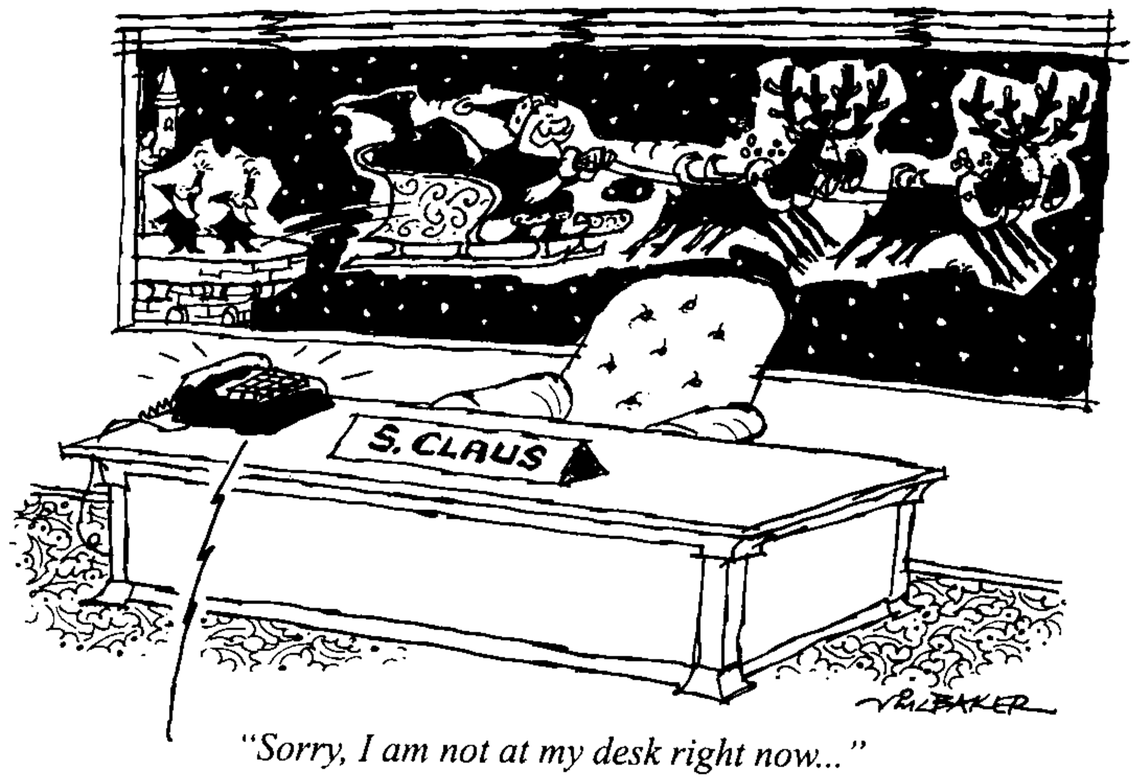
Well said, Derry! Better one "sinner" who repenteth than a hundred righteous men who aren't friends of mine! T.B.

St Albion's Primary School Carol Concert

The Chairman of Governors Mr Blunkett writes: "This event was a huge success! I think we're all agreed that the highlight was the Vicar and I singing a duet of the Special St Albion's Carol — *Third Way In A Manger!"*

NEXT WEEK:
Special Christmas Recipe Feature, including Mr Mandelson's favourite Brazilian Punch (0% proof!).

THE COLLECTED ST ALBION PARISH NEWS — £4.99 "...brilliant reinvention of Tony Blair as the trendy, passive-aggressive clergyman sweetly bullying his cowed parishoners into the proper PC attitude." — The Evening Standard



"Sorry, I am not at my desk right now..."

STATUE OF GAY ICON UNVEILED

by Our Man In Trafalgar Square
Lunchtime O'Bosie *(surely 'Boys'? Ed)*

THE best-known no.. ..sexual in British history was commemorated today when hundreds of celebrities gathered for the unveiling of a life-size statue of the writer, wit raconteur and social lion Peter Mandelson.

The stars queued up to pay tribute to the man who has become a synonym for the love that the BBC dare not speak his name.

JOHN BIRTIE WOOFTER

Speaking to a mass audience of pigeons and foreign tourists, the actor and writer Stephen Fry (who portrayed Mandelson in the recent film *Carry On Spin Doctor*) spoke movingly about a man who had become "a victim of prejudice" and who had been forced by the Establishment of his time to become Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Another leading actor, Mr Nigel Hawthorne, said: "We gays are still being persecuted today. Peter Mandelson showed us the way by keeping quiet and telling the BBC not to mention his name ever again."

Oscar Wilde is 178.

THE Sun

WHO IS THIS ******* FOREIGNER TELLING US WHAT TO DO?

He is Rupert Murdoch

Introducing the Eye's Exciting New Columnist

POLLY FILLER

THIS morning the nanny was late. Again. Charlie, my two year old began screaming. My partner was no help, because he had stayed out half the night, watching the football with his friends.

Sometimes I think he's a bigger baby than the baby. Anyway, I knew it was going to be one of those days.

"Why are you late?" I said to the nanny, when she finally came through the door.

I was seriously annoyed because I was planning to meet a friend at Peter Jones to look at sofas — though why I want to buy another sofa for Charlie to be sick all over is beyond me.

At this point, Simon, my partner, finally appeared from upstairs.

"I'm having a terrible morning," he said. "My computer's crashed and now I've lost one of my contact lenses."

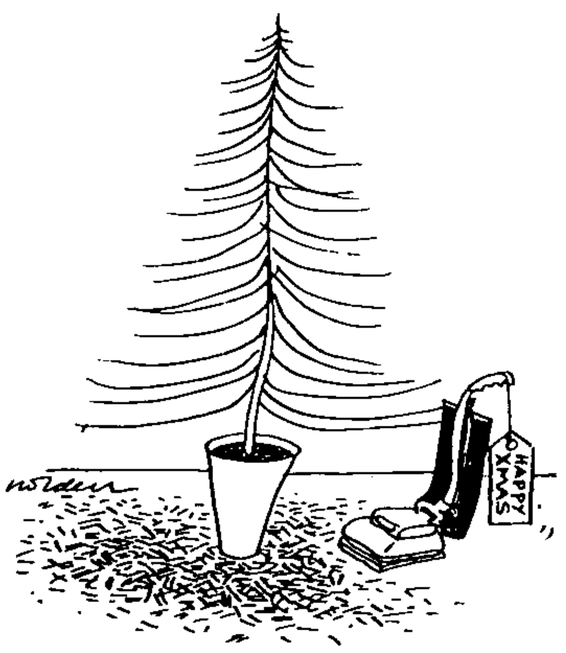
"What about me?" I said. "The nanny's late, and I was meant to be meeting Liz to look at sofas in Peter Jones."

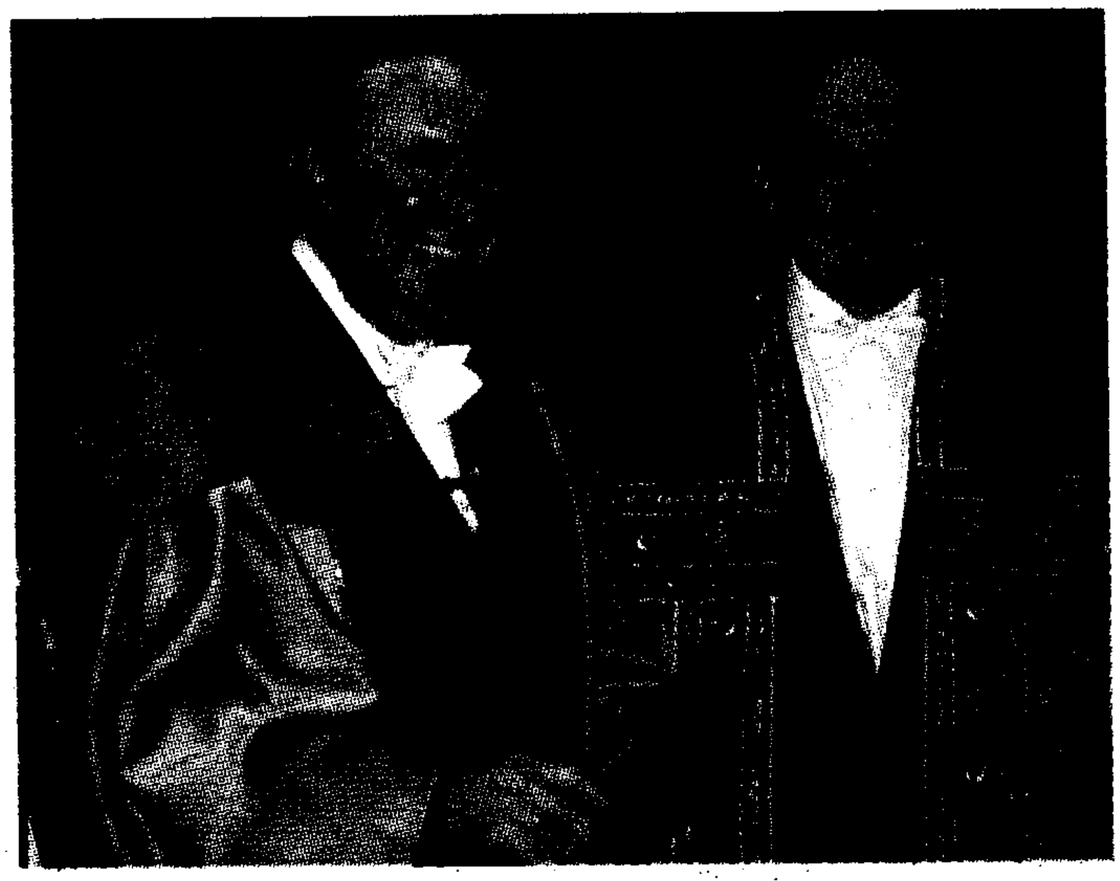
"I'm sorry I'm so late," the nanny lamely explained. "I've been up all night with my father who's dying."

"Shut up and stop whingeing," Simon and I both said simultaneously.

Then we laughed. Thank goodness we agree about some things.

© *All newspapers.*





THAT HONORARY DEGREE CITATION IN FULL

SALUTAMUS ANDREAS NEILLENSIS ALIAS BRILLUS PADDUS ILLUSTRIUS EDITORIS DOMENICUS TEMPUS SYCOPHANTISSIMUS RUPERTO MURDOCHI ET UGANDUS DISCUSSIONE EXPERTUS CUM MULTIBUS ASIATICI BAMBINIBUS IN PARTICULARE PAMELLO BORDELLO ET SUBSEQUENTER APPARRAVIT IN TELEVISIONE IN MEDIO NOCTE PORTANS BRACES RUBRES SED NUNC IN CALEDONIA RETURNAVIT UBI LABORET PRO FRATRIBUS BARCLAYI SINISTRISSIMI ET FAYEDENSIS FUGGINONUS AEGYPTUM CROOKORUM

(CONT'D. P. XCIV)

©Napier University, Edinburgh

TV

THE SOUTH BARG SHOW

Announcer: And now the 7000th edition of the South Barg Show, with presenter Lord Melvyn of Barg.

(Man with strange hair sits opposite bespectacled man in black polo neck)

Barg *(for it is he)*: Tonight we have an exclusive interview with the world's greatest living playwright, Harold Pinter.

(There is a long pause, followed by another)

Barg: Good evening. Harold. *(Long silence)* Do you think they're watching?

Pinter: *(Pause)* Who?

Barg: You know. Them. *(Pause)*

Pinter *(menacingly)*: Them?

Barg: It's getting late.

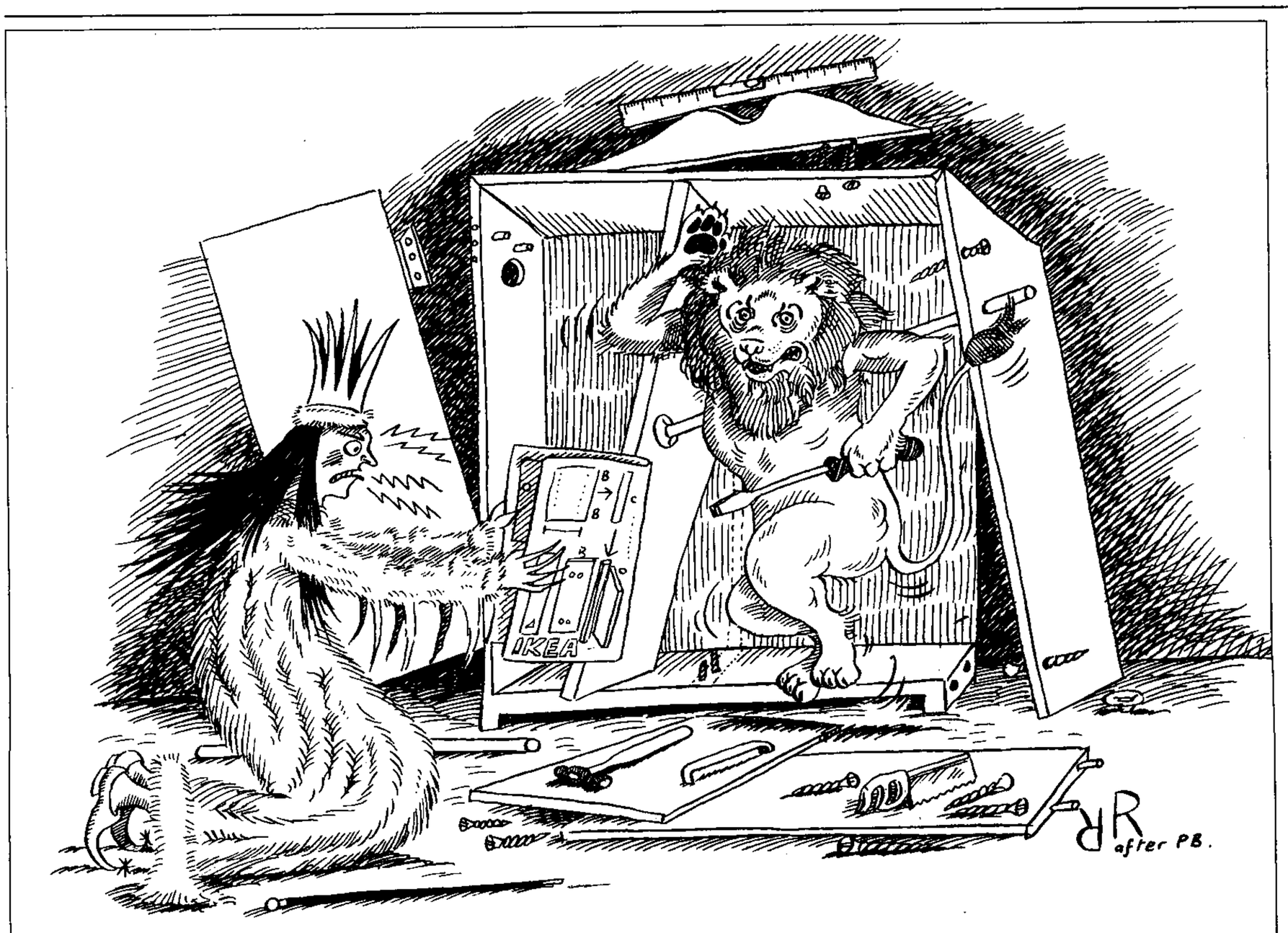
Pinter: Too late for them.

Barg: Yes. They've probably all turned off and gone to bed.

Pinter: Bastards.

ENDS

© Bargtrash Productions 1998.



The Lion, The Witch & The [IKEA] Wardrobe

POETRY CORNER

Lines on the Death of Giant Haystacks, Famous TV Wrestler

So. Farewell
Then.
Giant Haystacks.

You have
Gone down
For the last
Time.

Or is it
All staged
As Keith's
Mum always
Thought?

No. Sadly
Not.

E.J. Thribb (17fi stone)

TATE GALLERY PAINTING BY NUMBER TWOS

© Chris Offili-Bad

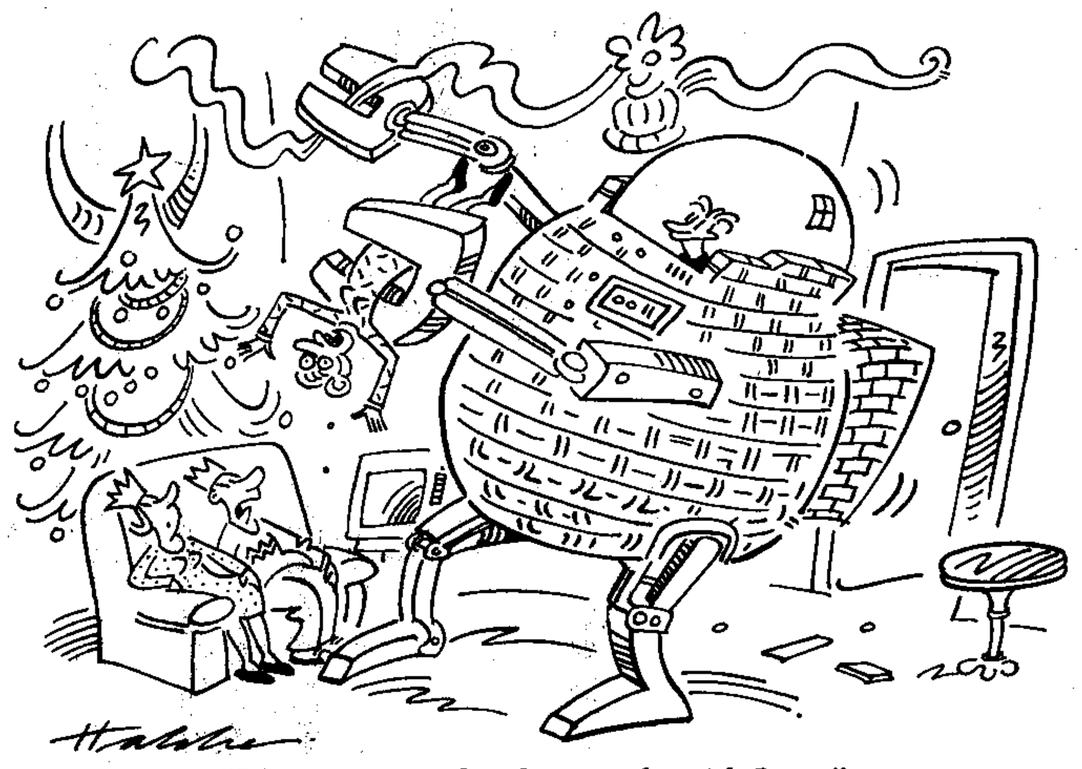
2 Dung
2 Poo
2 Crap
2 Business
2 Doo-doo
2 Mess
2 Cak
2 Turds

(That's enough shit, Ed)

DAILY TELEGRAPH FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1998

The Last Of The Cecils

THE dismissal of Lord Cranberry, the heir to the ancient Marquessate of Jelly, brings a sad end to 2000 years of British history. For centuries, the Cecil family has served this country with an unparalleled courage and distinction. The first Marquess played a key role in the setting up of the Star Chamber, which did so much to shape the evolution of British justice. In the 19th century, the 14th Duke was the leader of the so-called "Hatchet Set", named after his country seat Hatchet House, responsible for plotting the downfall of four successive prime ministers, including the unfortunate Lord Palmolive, who fell to his death while out shooting with the Marquess's son, the Earl of Loganberry ...razor-sharp minds... invaluable counsel... indispensable courtiers... obscure men in suits... totally untrustworthy... completely unscrupulous... this one worse than all the others... utter bastard... Hague quite right to sack him.



"It's amazing what he can do with Lego"

WACKO'S SON TO GO TO CAKES

by Our Educational Staff **Lunchtime Old Boys**

THE son of millionaire pop singer Michael Jackson has been put down for the prestigious £8,000-a-term Midlands public school, St Cakes.

The famous school, with its traditional motto "Who Pays Enters", boasts a number of eminent old boys, including the Duke of Gloucester, Lord Irvine of Lairg and General Augusto Pinochet.

Now the school is to open its doors to its richest ever pupil, to be known simply as Michael Wackson Jackson III Junior.

Said Headmaster R. Kipling, "We want to try and achieve a better racial mix at St Cakes. At the moment we have a lot of black pupils and we will welcome a white face like Wacko's."

Sex, Drugs and Public School

"The important thing," he continued, "is that St Cakes maintains its traditions. Parents like Mr Jackson can rest assured that their sons will spend much of their time in bed with other small boys."

Wacko Minor's First Term Announcement In Full

THRILLER Term begins on Jan 17th. There are 378 boys in the school and one chimpanzee. Miss Elizabeth Taylor has been appointed Matron.

The Off-The-Wall game will be played on Feb 3rd. The Jackson Fives Tournament will be held on Feb 18th. Colours (white) will be awarded on the Long Playing Field.

The school concert will take place at the Shea Stadium in New York before going on a world tour supported by Lourdes Madonna and the Cheltenham Ladies College Choir.

St Cakes is an independent school which is currently bubbling under the top ten in the League Charts (498th).

HUSBAND

The Duke of Edinburgh arrived in an RAF helicopter today to embark on his first official visit to the Irish Republic.

The drunk was later to attend a function with Mrs McAleese at Dublin Castle for the launch of an initiative for the Irish equivalent of his own award.

Express & Star

COSTALOTTI'S
The Liveliest Italian Restaurant in Town
Advertisement

SPARE a thought this Christmastide for a frail old gentleman, fearing for his life, in a secluded 12-bedroom mansion in Surrey.

General A.P. is wanted by the police of 87 countries. His only crime is to have organised the murders of thousands of his fellow Chileans.

He had only come to London to seek medical treatment and to do his Christmas shopping for arms in Fortnum and Masons.

Now, thanks to the oppressive tyranny of Jack Straw and his brutal Home Office henchmen, the old man could soon face a Spanish firing squad.

At any moment there could be a knock on the door, and the persecuted invalid will be hustled into a Black Maria and bundled unceremoniously onto the next plane back to Santiago.

[redacted]

Will you help this prisoner of conscience to escape the British death squads?

Send money at once to us, the members of British Committee of Atrocity International.

MEMBERS: Lady Thatcher of Belgrano, Rt Hon Al Clark, Mr Robin Birley, Mr Paul "Loonybins" Johnson, Mr Taki Takalotofcokupthenos, the late A. Hitler.

The Tony Benn History of Britain

Chapter 94

The Persecution of Peter Tatchell

OUR freedoms in this country have been hard-won. We think of such great martyrs to the cause of liberty as Wat Tyler, the Tolpuddle Six and Nelson Mandela.

But as the 20th century came to an end, another illustrious name was added to this glorious role of honour.

For years young Peter Tatchell, or "Pink Pete" as he was known, burned with outrage at the iniquities of the Established Church, which barred entry to the priesthood to practising homosexuals, except most of them.

Furthermore, difficult though it is to believe today, the all-powerful Archbishop of Canterbury, the feared and hated George Carey, had issued an edict actually refusing to allow same sex partners to be married in church.

Peter determined to overthrow these bastions of heartless prejudice.

He therefore set out from London, with a small band of followers, on a pilgrimage to the distant city of Canterbury.

THOUGHT FOR THE GAY

Here Carey was due to preach one of his infamous fire-and-brimstone sermons, calling on his congregation to try to be a bit nicer to each other, in a very real sense.

Just as he reached his climax, the gallant Peter climbed into the pulpit, holding a placard proclaiming "Death To Carey, The Homophobic Fascist".

He had barely time to shout "Carey, Carey, Carey, Out, Out, Out," when a mob of two churchwardens brutally asked him if he would mind keeping quiet because the congregation was trying to get some sleep.

Two years later the courageous "Pink Pete" was dragged before the courts and tried under an ancient mediaeval law which carried the terrifying penalty of a small fine.

In a day that will shame British justice for many centuries to come, a fiercely reactionary judge ordered Pete to be transported to an adjoining room, where he would have to hand over the then-astronomic sum of £18.60 (the equivalent of no less than 8 million euros in today's money).

The unfortunate Tatchell was led screaming from the court *(cont'd. p. 94)*

ABSOLUTE MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

A Tragedy In One Unnatural Act by T.S. Eliot

(Scene: The interior of Canterbury Cathedral. A service is in progress. The Archbishop is preaching to an attentive congregation [Sir Sydney and Lady Doris Bonker-Smythe])

Archbishop: I think, in a very real sense, we need to look at this word Easter more closely. We think of eggs, of chocolate rabbits, and of decorated bonnets in a parade.

(Enter Tatchell with four gay knights)

Tatchell: Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?

Four Men With Moustaches: We will, Peter. Leave it to us, love.

(The four gay knights assault the pulpit and push the helpless primate to the floor)

Chorus of Wailing Women: Woe, woe, woe. This will not look good in tomorrow's Daily Telegraph.

Curtain

GLENDA SLAGG

Now you can download her from the Internet! on www.slaggoff.co.uk

MICK JAGGER!!!! Aren'tcha sick of him??! Come off it grandad!?!!

At your age you should be looking after kids.

Not chasing them round your bedroom!?!

Pick up the paper and what do you see on every page???!

Your wrinkly old face a-leerin' and a-peerin' at some brainless little bimbo who just wants to get her hand on what's in your trousers — i.e. your wallet!?! Geddit??? You shouldn't at your age, you jumping jack flasher!!?!?!

You're a Jerry-Atric. So stick with Jerry Hall!! Okay??!?

HATS OFF to Mick Jagger!!! He may be 69, but he can still show the youngsters a thing or two about pulling the birds!?!?!

With his crinkly smile and gleaming false teeth, Grandad Mick is still the world's Number One little red rooster!?!?

No wonder there's a queue of luscious young babes stretching round the block, only too willing to give Mick some satisfaction!?!?

Geddit??? I'm sure he does, ten times a night.

And good luck to him!!?!?!

FERGIE!! Who does she think she is?!?!

Her Majesty the Queen has bent over backwards to give the Duchess of Pork a cosy little £10 million, 80-bedroom house in Surrey.

And how does our ratfaced redhead reply??

Thanks, but no thanks, your ma'amship!!?!

What a way to treat our beloved Queen!!!

I SAY hats off to the Duchess Fergiana!!

The gal's got guts like Uri Geller's got bent spoons!?!?!

At last we've got someone who's prepared to tell those toffee-noses at the Palace "stuff your mansion — I just want to live in a tent".

Well said, your Fergyship!?!

They should give her a £10 million mansion in Surrey as a present from a grateful nation!!?!?

HERE they are, Glenda's Xmas mince guys!!! (Geddit?!?!?!)

Lord Cranborne, the sexiest Cecil since Parkinson!! If you want a second chamber, my bedroom's always got a vacancy!!?!?!

Sir Richard Greenbury! So you've got the sack!?!?! Bring it round to my place and we'll both jump in it!?!?

Oskar Lafontaine!! Crazy name, crazy kraut!! *(Surely 'guy'? Ed.)*

Byeeeeee!

€ We Answer Your Questions On The Euro €

An Eye Guide To The Issue No One Is Talking About

Q. If we join the euro in 2002, is it true that we will have to pay VAT at 25 percent on children's shoes?

A. No, particularly if you don't have children — though there will be VAT on duty-free pyjamas, which are currently zero-rated.

Q. How many euros will I get for my pound when we join?

A. This will depend on a number of key economic variables, such as the dollar-yen parity, the broad-band fluctuation in euro-zone currencies between now and 31 December 2001, the effect of global warming and the next reappearance of the Leonid shower. Anyway, you won't have any pounds because they will all have been abolished.

Q. Will I be able to change my English euros for foreign euros?

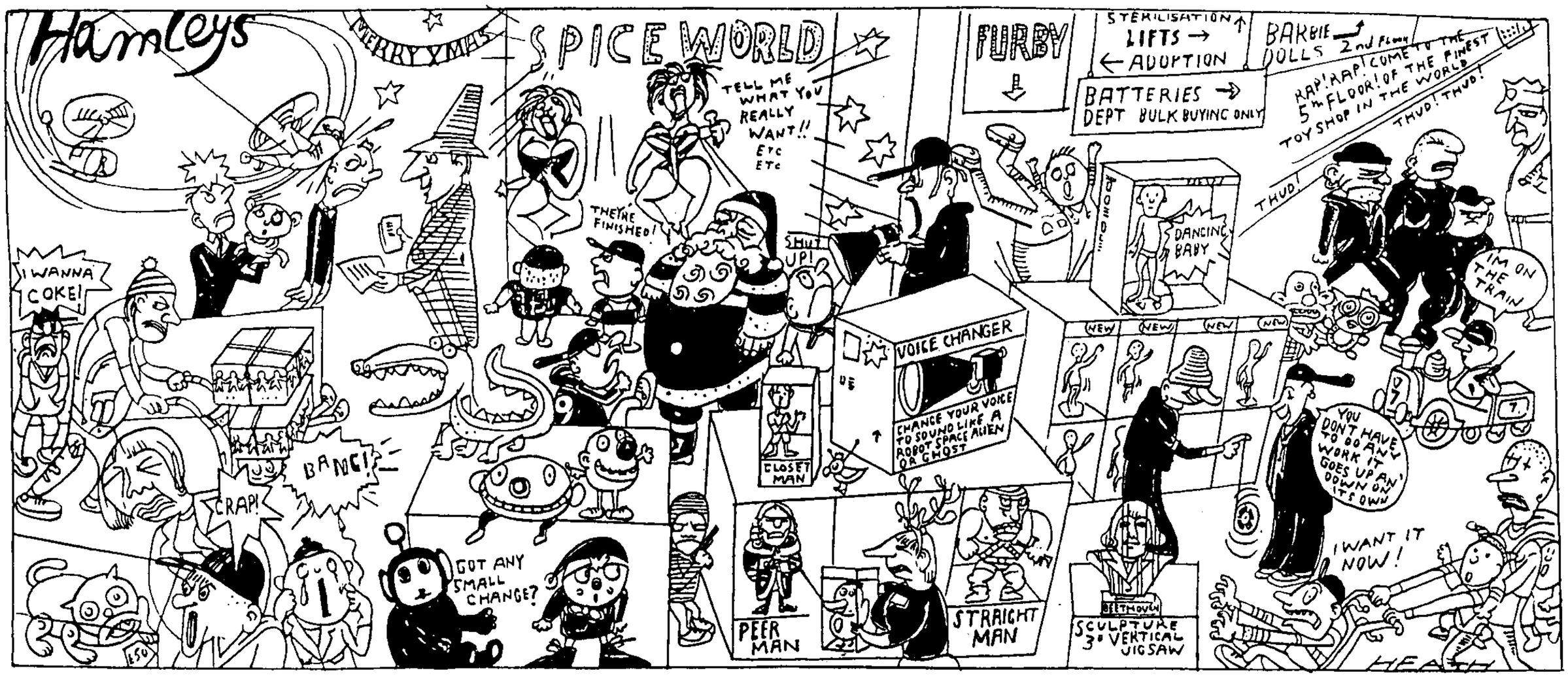
A. If you are travelling in an EU country, your euros will be interchangeable at par anywhere within the 11-nation euro-zone, unless you are a football hooligan, when your money will be confiscated and used to repatriate you.

Q. Is it true that German tanks will soon be rolling down the Mall, and a swastika will be flying over Buckingham Palace?

A. The Sun says "Yes", and not before time. Wake up, Britain, before it is too late.

If you have any questions about the euro, please send them to the Eye, so that we don't have to make them up like the ones above.

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW



DIARY

MEG MATHEWS

Honestly. Don't they have nothing better to do? One tabloid sez I'm only famous 'cos I'm married to Noel Gallagher.

Yeah, right.

Another sez I spend my whole time partying with my great mates.

Yeah, double right.

What are these tabloid journos, bloody Nazis or what?

FACT: I work a 12-hour day in my own right, listening to the answerphone, shopping for the next fashion shoot, phoning for the pizza, making sure my personal fish supervisor feeds the goldfish on time and fishes the dead ones out the water, shopping for the next party, saying goodbye to my old great mates, meeting some new great mates, shopping for a new house for the swimming-pool, igsecra, igsecra — as all my fans know, being Meg Mathews is a full-time job!

A lot of my time is spent organising and stuff. Like, Noel and me really like watching the soaps and stuff, but we haven't got time to watch them all, so like most people we employ a personal soap-watcher to take notes and someone else to type the notes up, and like a personal videoist to video the best bits, a personal editor to edit them down, igsecra, igsecra, personal projectionist, igsecra, igsecra, then this week to top it all I've had to conduct a range of interviews with applicants for the post of coming round with the ice-cream tray in the middle — and then you need the personal cleaners to pick up the cartons and spatulas you've left round on the floor and stuff. And someone's gotta scrape the pizza off the seats and — you got it — it's me who's gotta find that someone. And still the tabloids claim I just lie around doing nothing and looking really great! Durrh!

Lemme tell you something, right. No matter how high you climb in this business, no matter how many houses and friends you can afford, you mustn't ever forget your roots. That's why I always make a point of getting mine done at John Frieda in Mayfair every Tuesday. But it's a full-time job, right. First, I have to find something to wear to go there, so I stop off at Mucci and buy a new green Pucci boob-tube, then I'm in like really bad need of some new green shoes to go with the new Pucci boob-tube so I just have to go to the new Gucci in Bond Street, right, then it's to Lucci for a green combat-jacket, then when I get back to the Porsche I realise I've forgotten it's gold, which doesn't go, no way, so I have to rush round to the showroom for a new one in green, right. Then I grab a few minutes to really mellow out.

On the way, I drop in on Noel in the studio and stuff. Oasis are recording a really great new song, "Hey June". It's not just a totally searing howl of pain, it's also a terrible indictment of everything we think we know and don't and quite a lot we think we don't and do and a fair bit we think we don't know and in fact really don't know in the capitalist world of Thatcher's Britain. Noel's lyrics are truly superb:

"Hey June, don't make it bad
Take a sad song and make it better
Remember to let her into your heart
Then you can start to make things better
Na na na na na na na, na na na na na"

I leave the studio utterly numbed at this painful cry of anguish at the lives of young homeless people on the street in our inner cities. There must be something we can do for them, right. I vow to ask Noel tonight to like sign five hundred autographs, cos that way we can get them to my special events secretary for distribution among the needy in time for Christmas. And then another idea comes — we'll hand-pick some really, really poor people to attend the upcoming glam opening of the new Miu Miu store in New Bond Street! Like, they can stand outside behind the beautiful big red velvet ropes and watch and cheer and really soak up the glam while mega-stars like Kate Moss, Sophie Dahl and Zoe Ball make their entrances! They'd remember a night like that all their lives, right? And as Noel sez it's about time we all did something to break down the lah-di-dah class barriers in this society and stuff. Respect.

Talking of Yuletide, here at Supernova Heights we go in for all the usual in-your-face traditional festivities — Turkey and Trimmings Pizza, the lot. Last year, right, Liam got his personal dresser to get him togged up as Santa, right, then we hired a great bunch of these really poor kids from the village to come to our exclusive Lutcherns house and sit around the all-gold fireplace, right, Christmas in a million for them, right, and then Liam was meant to come down the chimney, right, only he didn't cos he was up on the roof with his second bottle of Jim Beam and him and Patsy had been having it out, right, after he started eyeing up this bird on Christmas Eve, so when Liam finally fell down the chimney his beard was hanging off his elbow and his tunic was over his shoulders and all the little toys in his sack had smashed and stuff and there was puke all down him, probably once been pizza margherita from the look of it, but luckily our personal coachdriver agreed to run the kids back home early, which was great.

On Boxing Day, we always go for a walk round our 200-acre estate. Noel bought it after the success of the "Shitty Old World in the Ghetto" single back in '96. The grounds include two fully heated swimming pools, one for us, one for the car, three Canova statues (four 'til Liam got up to his tricks with the baseball bat!), two Olympic size personal gymnasiums, his and hers, and a French chateau Noel imported from the Lwarr valley in France. Of course, after 'bout two hundred yards, Noel always gets pissed off with doing our Boxing Day walk, he can't be doing with it, so we say like let's forget it, go back into the house and get our Personal Walkers Jez and Dave to finish it for us while Noel gets someone to order a pizza and stuff. Life's like that.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

The Mirror: Camilla Parker Bowles last night dramatically appeared with Prince Charles at an official royal engager inquiry last night as police dug up remote moorland in a search for bodies.

Evening Post (Bristol)

4.35 PICK **THE QUEEN'S NOSE (T):** See Family Choice (S) (7797963).

Daily Mail Magazine

City Ballet of London Present
SLEEPING BEAUTY
Music by Tchaikovsky - with full orchestra
Sung in English

Brighton & Hove Leader

Literary Review

We're Theroux!

Sir Vidia's Shadow: A Friendship Across Five Continents

Paul Theroux

(Hamish Hamilton, £17.99)

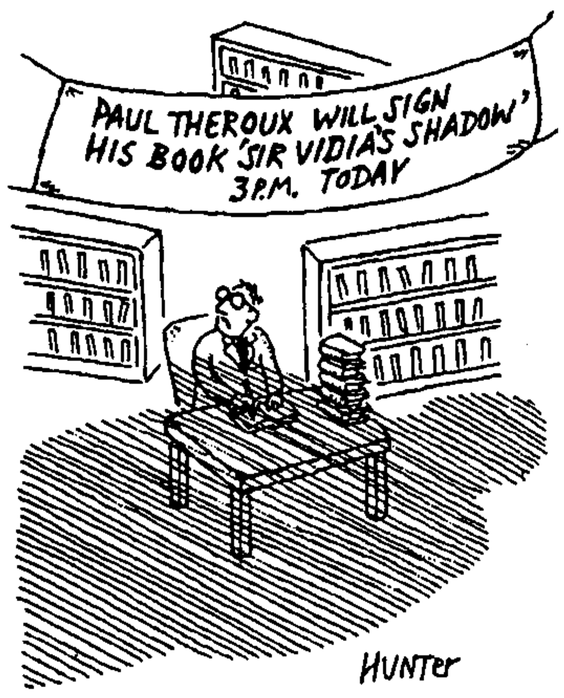
LITERARY quarrels, they get us all in the end, us *writers*. Dickens and Thackeray fought out a guerilla warfare through intermediaries for upwards of ten years. Mailer and Vidal, famously, came to blows. In our own time the elegant friendship played out for so long and over so many a Notting Hill snooker table between Mart and Julian came to an untimely end when Mart dispensed with the services of his agent, who just happened to be Julian's wife.

Us writers, you see, we're not good to hang around with. We catch sight of a royalty statement left lying about, we don't snatch that literary prize, that British Council trip to the Faroes, and then suddenly *bang!* Then, as Mart might say, come the aimings.

And the blamings. In this kind of thing, this scene, this fraught, subterranean landscape of lunches and hunches, advances and retreats, you might think that for someone who imagined themselves crossed in friendship to sit down and scrawl a 400-page treatise about it would be a mite excessive. You'd be wrong, buster. These are *writers* we're talking about here, with their proud memories, their cruel scars of who settled the cab check back in '68. All this, make no mistake about it you amateurs down there, is *important*.

It all goes back to Kampala, Uganda, circa 1966 when wide-eyed, twentysomething Paul is teaching at the local university, and also having a high old time with a statuesque Nigerian babe called Yomo who drags him into the bedroom with yells of "Give me a baby" (unfortunately someone else got there first, which means an air ticket back to Lagos.) V.S. "Vidia" Naipaul — then 34 — turns up on some writers' freebie, delivers a few of his acid remarks about Africans and great world writers, wonders idly if the locals who make this wretched bongo music can be flogged and immediately awakens in our Paul a feeling of profound veneration.

Nothing is too much trouble — chauffeuring, escort service, respectful audience at Naipaul rants, wife harangues or readings from work in progress (Vidia is at work on *The Mimic Men*.) Subsequently, as his own literary career takes a modest pace or two forward, Theroux follows the Naipauls to England intent on providing a textbook lesson in how to make great writers feel at home — sits through their dinner parties, writes critical studies and admiring profiles, fists that wallet when, mysteriously, that Connaught bill is slow to be settled.



There is reciprocity, too, as well as one-way adulation. Vidia introduces Paul to some very important people — well, Edna O'Brien and Lady Antonia Fraser. He even drops the odd crumb or two of approbation for Paul's books. For decades the airmail letters and the faxes fly back and forth from whichever part of the globe our intrepid travellers are fetched up in. And then, inexplicably, it all goes belly-up. Freezeout. The big push. Something to do with an obituary Theroux wrote for the *Daily Telegraph* of Naipaul's first wife, Pat, a queer demurral from her hastily snapped up successor, *I* don't know. Those writers, who can tell what sets them off, brings them together, blows them apart?

Needless to say Theroux's methods in this outsize wail of injured pride are hugely suspect — conversations of three decades past, bygone dinner party chat all recalled in word-perfect detail: you know the kind of thing. What *is* he up to here? What's the agenda? Cynicism would suggest that all this accumulated pique is an indirect way of hinting that old V.S. is, well, less good than we all thought — what might be called the second-best-bed invalidating *Hamlet* scenario.

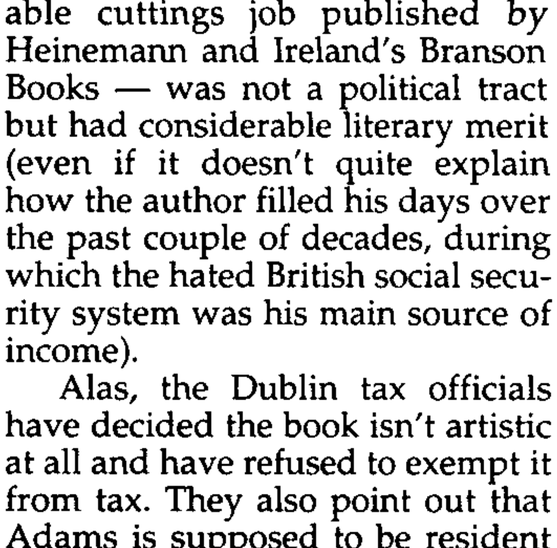
Cynicism would be wrong. In fact, Theroux's agenda is a touch more oblique. The last few years have seen our man mounting a spirited campaign to burnish up his reputation, issuing books of collected short stories, collected short novels and what-not — stout volumes whimpering out for serious attention. Putting himself centre-stage with Vidia — and incidentally telling us a great deal about himself in the process — is another milestone on this route. Vidal vs Mailer. Mart vs Jules. Paul vs Vidia. Wow!

Some of it's quite funny — particularly the blurb, which compares our man to Rilke and Boswell. No diss to Mr Theroux, who on his day is capable of pulling off major surprises (see last year's Hong Kong handover novel *Kowloon Tong*), but essentially this is an account of a first-division talent compiled by a second-division onlooker. Going back to those Victorian minotaurs, Dickens and Thackeray had something to quarrel about — not least sharply opposed ideas of how the world worked and how you ought to write novels about it. This, alas, falls into the category of spurned acolyte getting the brush-off.

Books & Bookmen

■ SO, the literary pretensions of Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein's man of peace, have taken a knock thanks to philistine tax authorities in the Irish Republic.

Sales of the Belfast West MP's appalling *Before the Dawn* were evidently strong (unlike his previous efforts whose non-profits were dedicated to the cause) — so strong in fact that St Gerry wanted to go into tax exile. The well known revolutionary socialist decided that paying income tax was only for the well-to-do (ie nurses, waitresses, cleaners, etc) and applied to the revenue commissioners in Dublin



for exemption of all tax on earnings from the book.

Claiming to be an artist, Adams argued that the book — a laughable cuttings job published by Heinemann and Ireland's Branson Books — was not a political tract but had considerable literary merit (even if it doesn't quite explain how the author filled his days over the past couple of decades, during which the hated British social security system was his main source of income).

Alas, the Dublin tax officials have decided the book isn't artistic at all and have refused to exempt it from tax. They also point out that Adams is supposed to be resident in, er, Belfast. Any tax liability, therefore, is a matter for the Brits.

■ **RETIRED Lloyd's broker Derek Adie Flower has been overheard enthusing wildly about Pharos Publications, the mysterious Isle of Man-based imprint that is publishing his debut novel *Farewell Alexandria*.**

"Their main concern is with quality and good writing," he effuses. "They're going to sign up good authors who don't have a chance with the big name publishers."

A laudable aim to be sure. But would it be churlish to suggest that Flower's own chances with Pharos were significantly improved by the presence of his daughter Merial on the board of directors?

QUIZ TIME

A SEASONAL challenge to book reviewers and sex experts alike. In the huge Tom Wolfe novel *A Man in Full*, what is "that thing with the cup" — the depraved but irresistible sexual practice which drives the hero so crazy when his mistress does it with him that he divorces his wife to marry her?

'Bookworm'

The Private Eye Team will be signing copies of:

The 1998 Private Eye Annual
St Albion Parish News
Colemanballs 9

at BORDERS, 201-203 Oxford Street, London W1

on Monday 14 December from 1.00pm - 2.00pm

To reserve signed copies contact Borders on 0171 292 1600

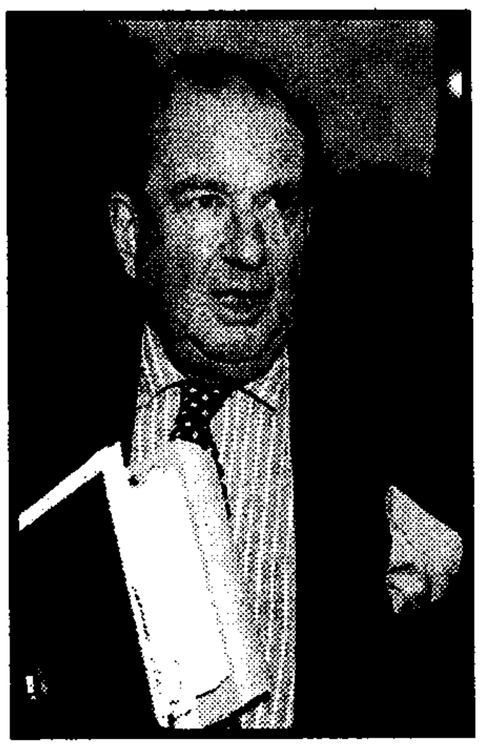
footnotes

KIND HEARTS AND CORONER

HAVE you heard the one about the undischarged bankrupt with a drink-driving conviction who became Her Majesty's coroner?

David Morris, a solicitor, was appointed in 1992 when Bedfordshire county council grandees replaced Dr John Harte who was retiring as county coroner.

The previous year Mr Morris had been persuaded by a crooked client to guarantee overdrafts at the Trustee Savings Bank which couldn't be met. The TSB promptly made Morris bankrupt. This was not Mr Morris's only worry. A year earlier he had been convicted of being over the limit while driving, fined £100 and disqualified for a year.



MAN OF INTEGRITY: Coroner Morris

Mr Morris tells the *Eye* the incident took place "in circumstances which were unusual" and "the magistrates publicly expressed their regret at having to disqualify me". He points out that he was discharged from bankruptcy in 1994, still practises as a solicitor and that the Bedfordshire burghers who appointed him "were fully aware of the true circumstances and I presume I was appointed on merit".

Asked whether his bankruptcy or conviction in any way affected his work as a coroner, Mr Morris replied: "No, save I am older and wiser. I hope that I exercise my public duties with compassion and understanding."

Mr Morris's compassion and understanding were on parade recently at the Bedford inquest of Mick Fitzgerald, who was shot dead last February in his own home by armed police after he brandished a replica gun at them. Police were called to the house by Fitzgerald's girlfriend. She thought Fitzgerald was away, and when she heard someone moving about in the house she thought he was a burglar.

A neighbour, Katy Bellamy, who says she told police before the raid that the only guns in Fitzgerald's house were fakes, was not called to give evidence. Mr Morris directed the jury that their only possible verdict was lawful killing, and they promptly complied.

The coroner has been bitterly criticised by the dead man's family and by a local paper, *Bedfordshire on Sunday*. "From the word go," said the paper's leader on 29 November, "the coroner's court was set up to protect the police." The paper cited "the use of screens to protect the police", "the strange case of the witnesses who were not called" and the direction about the verdict. The family's lawyer says the family will be seeking judicial review of the inquest. Mr Morris says the *Eye*'s sources in Bedford "wish to curry favour with you and have their own agenda. So be it — that must be a matter for your integrity".

High Principals

KINGSTON ROVER

NOWHERE has the "new" Labour dream of a partnership between big business and bright radical academics become more true than at Kingston University.

The popular chancellor is Sir Frank Lampl, chairman of the big construction company Bovis, who regularly gives lifts abroad in his private jet to his admiring staff.

No one at the university had heard of Sir Frank until the day in August 1993 when he went to inspect the site of the spanking new halls of residence on the Kingston campus. The contract had been won by Bovis. Ten months later, in June 1994, Sir Frank became chancellor.

PADLEY'S PADLOCK

WHAT has happened to Dr John Padley, the former registrar of Sheffield University?

He took early retirement last September to concentrate on what he called his "pet project": UNECEA, a combine which provides research mainly to the undeveloped world from old-established universities.

Dr Padley can't be contacted at the luxurious new UNECEA building at Sheffield and staff there say he has been removed from his office and the locks changed. Sheffield University won't comment. What can this mean?

The *Eye* asked Eddie Newcombe, registrar of Manchester University, who now has responsibility for UNECEA, but hasn't yet had a reply.

MELVILLE'S DREAM

ON a visit to New College, Nottingham, on 13 November Professor David Melville, chief executive of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), agreed to be interviewed by a student journalist. A section of the recorded interview went as follows:

Q: What do you think of the High Principals column in *Private Eye*?

A: Ha, well I think everyone feels that they'd rather it didn't exist. I think that most politicians open *Private Eye* and look at it. Local government people look at it. They look at it to see if they are in it. I do that too. I would hope that maybe they'll run out of stories and focus on some other part of public life to bring out the problems in.

UKDS: UK Death Service

■ HM Prison Blakenhurst, a private prison run by the American firm UKDS, appears to be setting up its very own Death Row.

Graham Biddle, who was serving two years ten months, was a young man in all sorts of trouble, who had tried several times to commit suicide. The obvious remedy for this was to lock him up in solitary confinement in the hospital "strip cell". He responded by going on hunger strike. After several days, the prison authorities suddenly realised he was in danger and rushed him to Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, where he died the next day, 26 October. A sensitive press release from UKDS explained that the young man had been sent to hospital "on compassionate leave".

Less than a fortnight later Christopher Smith, 33, who was severely disabled, was behaving so curiously that he was shifted out of Blakenhurst to Winson Green prison, Birmingham, on 6 November. The move proved to be inspired. Mr Smith hanged himself the next day.

Seven prison officers at Blakenhurst are still suspended awaiting an investigation by prison officials into the death of Alton Manning, a black prisoner at Blakenhurst who died a violent death in December 1995. The suspensions followed an inquest verdict that Mr Manning was unlawfully killed. On 25 March the deputy director of the prison service said he was "determined to ensure that the full facts of the case have been established, lessons learnt and appropriate action taken". Eight months later none of these aims has been achieved.

Sterling Loss

■ NO ONE shared Margaret Thatcher's passion for the free market more than Lord Sterling, the former property speculator who became chairman of P&O.

The P&O ferry which capsized with its bow doors open at Zeebrugge in 1987 killing 200 people was called The Herald of Free Enterprise. Soon afterwards P&O ruthlessly purged its ferries of organised trade unions, and when the workers went on strike in protest, sacked them. All this was done in the interests of free competition, and Thatcher was so proud of Sterling she put him on several influential cabinet committees.

Now a P&O subsidiary has been fined £27m for, er, illegally restricting competition on the lucrative transatlantic container freight run. The European commission has fined fifteen members of the Trans-Atlantic Conference Agreement for fixing prices and service agreements. The purpose of the infringements, said the commission, was to keep smaller companies out of TACA, or to bully them into joining TACA.

"The TACA parties abused their joint dominant position," says the commission, adding: "The seriousness of the infringements comes about in part because of the importance of potential competition in liner shipping markets." The highest fine — 41.26 million ecus (about £27m) was imposed on P&O Nedlloyd. At the time of the infringements, P&O and the Dutch firm Nedlloyd were separate companies, but both were held equally guilty of breaking the rules.

The TACA companies, including P&O, refuse to accept the verdict of the commission. They denounce it as "part of the commission's continuing attempt to limit the scope of liner conferences". Their appeal is likely to go on for four years. In the meantime the fines won't be paid. A P&O spokesman told the *Eye* that P&O was "confident the appeal will be upheld".

SHEER(NASTY)NESS!

DR Hugh Billot is probably the first person in the world to get a get a degree in union-busting.

His thesis, which won him a doctorate of philosophy from the department of sociology at Leicester University in March 1996, was called *From Industrial Relations to Human Resource Management: A Case Study of the Management of Change in the Steel Industry*. It was a long account of how most effectively to grind trade unions into the dust.

Dr Billot is personnel director at Co-Steel, a Canadian-owned steel plant employing 500 workers at Sheerness, Kent. The workers there have never been known for their militancy. In 1980 they worked during a national steel strike and earned the effusive plaudits of prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

In 1992, however, their union, the ISTC, was derecognised. Ever since the employers, guided by Dr Billot, have introduced a "new ethos" which rewards workers according to their "loyalty to the company". A points system separates "achievers" and "super-achievers" from "non-achievers" according to their willingness to work overtime whenever asked, to shun all contact with a trade union (except to report union activity to the management) and above all to show due deference to the board of directors and to Dr Billot.

UNION BUSTER: Dr Billot

Two years ago the company applied for and received an award from the British Safety Council. The union objected. The plant, it argued, was not at all safe. The Safety Council director studied the papers, talked to the workers and withdrew the award.

When the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents threatened to withdraw a similar award, Dr Billot and his henchmen organised a petition demanding that the award should be confirmed. It was. The union was flooded with complaints from workers that their decision to sign the petition had been influenced by the employers. Kevin Pass of ISTC says he got at least 30 complaints of threats and abuse. One man said he had been shouted at as "scum" until, for a quiet life, he agreed to sign.

The same tactics have now been used in a rather more sensitive arena: the House of Commons. On 21 October Derek Wyatt, the new Labour MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (where he overturned a Tory majority of 11,128), spoke briefly in a debate on the steel industry. He raised the case of Joe Davey, who had worked in the Sheerness plant for 25 years before being sacked a few days before Christmas 1996.

Davey, a hard-working crane driver, made no secret of his enthusiastic membership of his union and his contempt for the company's dictatorial management style. As a result, since 1992 Joe Davey never got a single pay rise. After a long hearing an industrial tribunal held that he had been sacked unfairly. Dr Billot was described as "disingenuous". "There is no doubt," the tribunal concluded, that Billot "is hostile to trade unions and that his view of the unions informed the company's approach." Davey, moreover, had been sacked "with indecent haste" and his appeal conducted "in an unfair and prejudiced manner".

Derek Wyatt made the point that Joe Davey had been unfairly sacked, had lost his job and had precious little chance of another one, while the man who unfairly sacked him not only kept his job and his high salary but continued to refuse trade union organisation to 500 men, three quarters of whom have voted for it. The plant, Wyatt concluded, was now up for sale and to make it more attractive 64 workers have been made redundant, 19 compulsorily. Needless to say, almost all the 19 were active members of ISTC. The senior management at CO Steel, Wyatt concluded, were "a disgrace".

Dr Billot and his "human resources" machine got to work on another petition, protesting this time about Wyatt's speech. Once again workers were advised by their managers that they were absolutely free to sign or not — but should carefully consider the consequences. Once again they signed, and then protested to the union.

Kevin Pass has recorded a long list of the complaints — "I felt I was intimidated by the team leader's pestering"... "verbal threats and abusive language"... "almost constant pressure with veiled threats from departmental managers"... "during my meal break the manager would not leave the mess room until I signed".

Such comments have to be anonymous. Union officials know that if the complainants are identified, their jobs will be threatened. Infuriated by the MP's criticism, and determined to impress buyers, the Co-Steel management spread the petition to its suppliers and delivered an enormous pile of signatories to Wyatt's office. Wyatt sent it straight back demanding addresses. He has asked the Speaker whether such a blatant use of employers' power to influence an MP might be a contempt of parliament.

PS. The Sheerness plant is up for sale.

DAYS OF PROTEST: Sarah Hipperson

Sarah's Lockout

SARAH HIPPERSON was convicted eight times and sent to prison for a total of two months for breaking "laws" which turned out to be illegal.

She tried to sue for false imprisonment but was let down by her solicitors. Though she has won her case alleging negligence against two celebrated London solicitors' firms, she still faces a bill for costs which could deprive her of her home.

In 1990 the House of Lords declared that by-laws which had been used in 1985 to arrest and imprison protesters against the cruise missile base at Greenham Common were unlawful. Sarah Hipperson consulted two firms of London solicitors, Hodge Jones & Allen and T.V. Edwards, about suing for false imprisonment. The solicitors dithered and most of her claims passed the six-year time limit and collapsed. When her last three claims against the ministry of defence police and Newbury magistrates finally came to court, she was told she should have sued the secretary of state and lost the case on this technicality.

The treasury solicitors' costs — nearly £7,000 — were awarded against her. She sued the solicitors for negligence, won, and was awarded a nominal £50 damages against both firms. But Mr Justice Smedley insisted that she, and not the negligent solicitors, should pay the £7,000. She has to cough up by 18 December. Her weekly income is £70.45 — so the compassionate treasury solicitors have "placed a caution" on her house. She could be out in the street by the New Year.

Dial 999 for Murder

All phone companies are obliged by law to answer customers' inquiries and emergency 999 calls. This service doesn't make big profits and has always been a bit of a drag for the companies.

BT provides its own inquiry services, and 12 other telephone companies hive off inquiries and emergency calls to BT's main competitor, Cable & Wireless. C&W duly set up "call centres" in Birmingham and Glasgow. Irritated by the small return on these centres, Cable & Wireless sold the centres on to an Arizona company called Excell Multimedia, whose boss, Don Zeleznick, is an old-fashioned sun belt redneck who resents taxes almost as much as he hates trade unions.

Staff at the Glasgow call centre were shocked not just by the low wages (a 999 operator gets £9,000 a year while an operator at Cable & Wireless 'customer retention centre' a few miles away gets £14,000), but by the appalling standards of the emergency services.

Again and again operators answering panic emergency calls found that the correct addresses of the callers were not in the databases maintained by the companies. As a result police could not get to the scenes of domestic violence, and ambulances and fire engines were sent to wrong addresses. The call centre staff were sending an average of 200 corrections a day to the companies — but very few were promptly transferred to the databases.

From January the operators complained to management but were told to mind their own business. In September, outraged by increasing chaos and stress following emergency calls, a group of staff decided to act. A representative of this group told the *Eye*: "I rang the home office several times and was told there was no one who could deal with the problem. I then rang Oftel [the privatised phone company regulator] and said I was a 999 operator with some extremely urgent complaints. I was given a number on permanent answerphone. I left my message and explained that I couldn't leave my name for fear of reprisals. No one at OFTEL would take the case on. Finally I went to the media."

He contacted *Which?*, the consumer magazine. So shocked were the editors there that they rushed out a press release on 26 November entitled CABLE AND WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS FAILURE PUTS LIVES ON THE LINE. The following day Oftel suddenly woke up and issued its own press release. "Oftel shares the staff's concerns and is treating the issue very seriously indeed," it started, without referring to the many calls from Excell staff which had been so studiously ignored over three months. Oftel now says they are giving Cable & Wireless two weeks to submit a "detailed compliance plan".

In the week which followed this prompt action the situation at the Glasgow call centre has got much worse and managers are straining every muscle not so much to correct the mistakes as to hunt down and punish the whistleblowers.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE truly amazing thing about the Geoffrey Robinson affair is the extent to which those who run the country appear to have been so completely taken in by his lifestyle that they never stopped to examine his business life.

Tony Blair and in particular Gordon Brown were clearly so impressed by visits to the assorted *chez*-Robinsons — Park Lane penthouse, Lutyens mansions, Cannes apartment, Tuscan villa — that they assumed generous Geoffrey was a business genius and as such must be part of "new" Labour's team and the Third Way. Which is why they are now stuck with how to drop him overboard — although not of course like his old mentor, the great pension pillager Robert Maxwell.

Their embarrassment could have been avoided if they had devoted a little time to studying the Robinson road to riches. They would have discovered that he was far from a great success in running Jaguar and was not exactly encouraged to stay. They would have discovered that far from being the reason for the success of TransTec, he had been forced out as chief executive by institutional shareholders tired of poor performance and bumper pay. But most of all they would have realised just how close he had been to Cap'n Bob, who had helped Robinson become a multi-millionaire after four years in which the MP had been helping to run Maxwell companies.

The current furore over the former Maxwell satellite Hollis, and the instant £1m profit made by Maxwell from buying and selling two subsidiaries before it collapsed, epitomises the relationship. Robinson went along with Cap'n Bob who repaid him by then taking over his company Transfer Technology in a deal which gave Robinson £7.25m in cash and shares.

The Maxwell albatross — unlike the Madame Bourgeois inheritance which made a big contribution to the Robinson lifestyle — was all too apparent over Geoffrey Robinson other than to those who refused to see. A blindness no doubt helped by Robinson's largesse.

This blindness is all the more remarkable as the fat crook Maxwell was a stick with which the Tories loved to beat Labour long before they came to power. But professional Labour politicians like Blair and Brown, with power but no prosperity, are notoriously naive about businessmen. Look at Wilson and the crooks with which he associated and whose generosity he accepted — Joseph Kagan, Eric Miller, Desmond Brayley. All three received honours from Wilson and invitations from the fraud squad.

Blair and Brown cosied up to Robinson and other businessmen because they wanted to be seen as City friendly. They also wanted to co-opt rather than alienate rich suits. Just like Wilson and Thatcher, they were impressed by the decisiveness of businessmen and their ability to get things done and make money for themselves and, hopefully, others.

Thatcher famously praised the little known commercial property developer David, now Lord, Young for bringing her solutions not problems. Young's business career post-government (Cable & Wireless: resigned) has been no more distinguished than pre-government. But no matter. He is now a peer.

Robinson too impressed Blair and Brown by his drive and willingness to tackle tasks others found too difficult. But as the ISA fiasco proved, he is long on promise, short on performance. A condition TransTec shareholders came to recognise long before Downing Street.

Robinson has always been a chancer prepared to take risks in order to get ahead. Allying with Maxwell was one such risk, but it paid off big time. Several of his business deals, such as those he "suggested" to the Orion Trust (buying shares in TransTec and Coventry City), were risky but only if revealed. Robinson has a track record for knowing just where the line is and going right up to but never over it. Deals could be criticised as slick but never as illegal or improper.

Blair's choice of Robinson as a frontbench spokesman was curious for another reason. Like all businessmen Robinson finds explanation difficult, cross-examination unbearable and apologising impossible. Arrogance is not a virtue among those who show disdain for such tiresome and trivial parliamentary rules as disclosing business interests. But then Robinson was never overly interested in being an active MP. He was too busy making money.

So what are his old friends and guests going to do about their generous host? In political terms he is clearly damaged goods and well past his sell-by date. Forensic examination of his business deals for himself and Maxwell will continue. More examples of Robinson's penchant for being on both sides of deals — always the best place to be — are probable. Even if most of the Tories' Maxwell-poisoned barbs are too old or too technical to prompt action by the Department of Timidity & Inaction — the most likely outcome — the drip, drip, drip of revelation is fast eroding any Robinson power base.

He has already used up most if not all his holiday markers with Blair to survive three parliamentary inquiries and the furore surrounding the Orion offshore trust. Blair was all for sacking Robinson in the summer reshuffle, replacing him with Geoffrey Hoon; but a last minute appeal from Brown, who had already lost several of his supporters, saved the paymaster-general's job.

Now there is a clear wish from the Blair camp that Robinson would do the decent thing and quit for the good of the party. But that is not Robinson's style. He is likely to have to be shelled out of the treasury and back to the anonymous oblivion of the backbenches he inhabited so comfortably for so long. Especially as Brown at least is still providing support.

But when he jumps or is pushed, Geoffrey Robinson will have received two presents from Labour. Its reform of the taxation of offshore trusts is unlikely to cause too much discomfort to the Orion trust. It will still be able to make payments to its discretionary beneficiaries, the Guernsey Family Robinson, tax free so long as they come from income or from shares on which no capital gain has been made — such as the £13m TransTec stake now worth nearer £4m thanks to the impact on the engineering sector of Brown's and the Bank of England's economic policies. Shares which cost the trust 112p are now 34p.

And looking longer term, should Robinson sell his personal share stake in TransTec, currently worth around £6m, he will benefit from another Brown innovation — "taper relief" at 40 percent on any capital gains which could reduce his personal tax bill by a million or more if he sells out after 10 years. That is of course assuming he does not sell up, shake the dust of an ungrateful Britain from his shoes and go to join the Bourgeois inheritance offshore and tax-free.

Whenever he goes, once again Geoffrey Robinson looks set to be a winner in money if not in politics.

"Of course — I should warn you, Jack, that the value of beans can go down as well as up"

THE enforced departure of Martin Taylor from Barclays clearly came as a relief to certain boardroom colleagues despite his famous "helicopter brain". No doubt they felt a little more time spent by the Taylor little grey cells on the ground rather than in the air might have prevented some of the business disasters such as BZW and Russia.

Certain of his colleagues may also not have been too pleased to discover that they had been the subject of investigation to see if they were leaking information to the media. Taylor commissioned a top secret probe by corporate private investigators to see whether any of his boardroom colleagues were suspect after a number of well informed Sunday newspaper stories.

Needless to say the allegations were found to be merely speculative and based on links between certain non-executives, PR men and Sunday newspapers. Obviously evidence of nothing.

THE failure of the Tring International bail-out orchestrated by Paul Levinson will come as no surprise to *Eye* readers. The deal whereby Tring (shareholder: Levinson) would buy Harvey Goldsmith Entertainments (shareholder: Levinson) and classical music impresario Raymond Gubbay's company was always hard to see. A view Gubbay eventually took when he walked away and the talks collapsed leaving Tring to head into receivership.

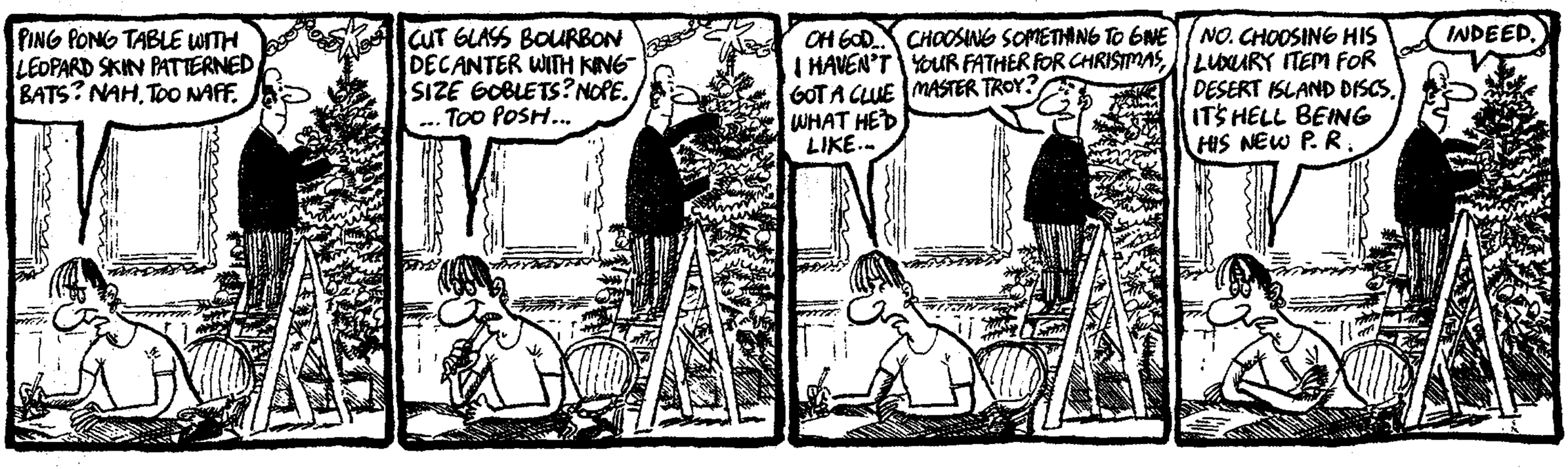
Gubbay is said to have lost patience with the prolonged stock exchange queries about the reverse takeover and Levinson's role. There is gossip — no doubt untrue — that Levinson was looking to make up to £250,000 as a finder's fee for bringing in Gubbay. This is said to have been slashed to £100,000 but this was still too much. The question now is where that leaves Goldsmith and his new best friend and backer, the unloved Levinson, at a time when he has recently lost key staff and has been hit by heavy losses in a film venture.

LIFE after politics is clearly hard. It seems the going rate for hearing the wit and wisdom of former Tory heir Michael Portillo is £6,000. This is suggested as the fee for Portillo addressing a property investment seminar last month.

'Slicker'

Celeb

LIGGER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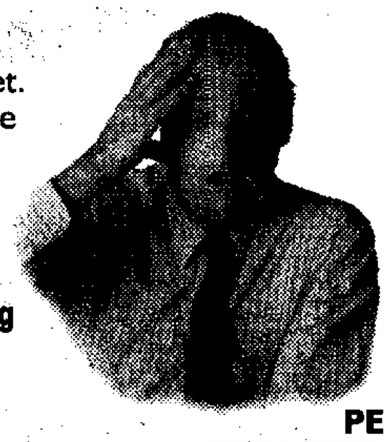

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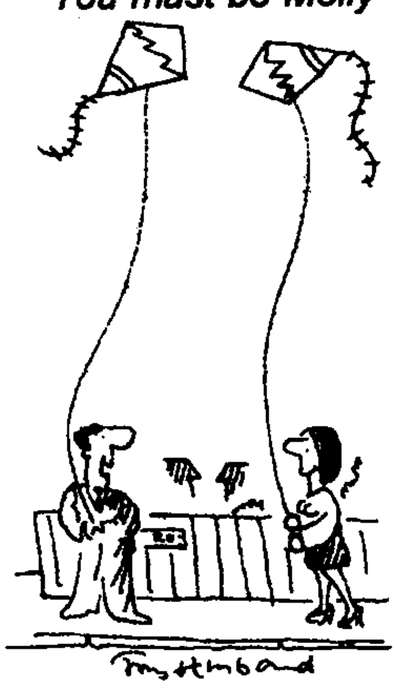

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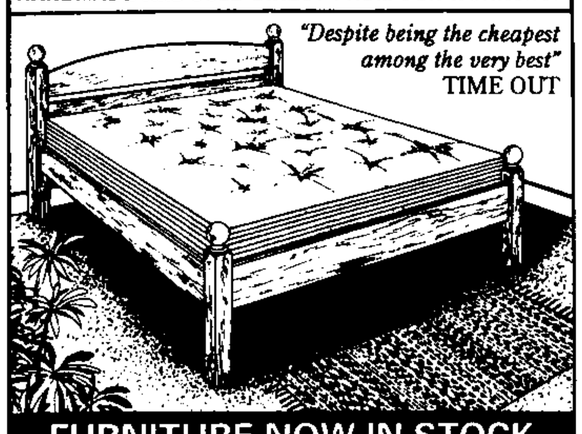

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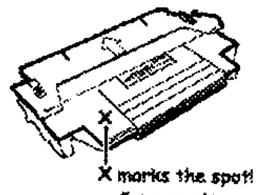

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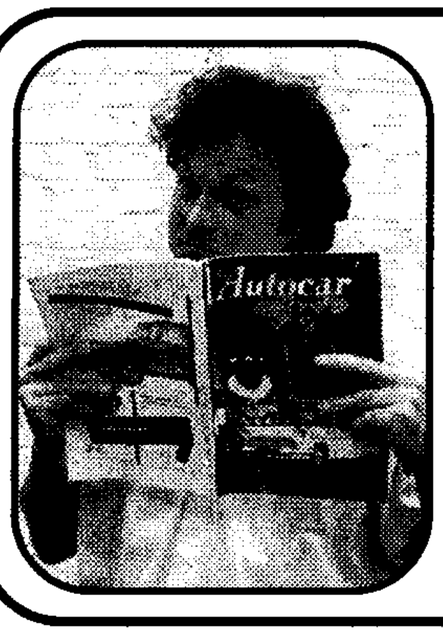

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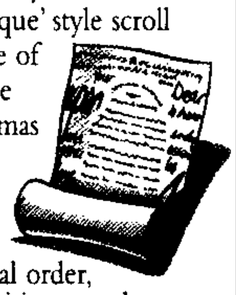

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SPEECHWRITING by Mitch Murray – see page 32.

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IMPECUNIOUS, but hard-working author would be monumentally grateful to anyone who would help him to pay the final instalment (£18000) of the publication cost for his first novel (ISBN 0 75410 604 7). Lloyds 30-92-89, 0667375.

AGHAST MUM needs £8,000 to secure home Debtor Dad abandoned. Everlasting thanks. Box 3565.

NEWLYWEDS IN TROUBLE, £9000 saves us. Abbey National 09-01-26, 46085833. THANKS!

MATURE CAMBRIDGE history graduate drowning in debt. £10,000 needed to re-float. Please help me. Lloyds 30-91-56, 2256958. Thank you.

SAVE A LIFE, 5yr old has rare Maroteaux Lamy disease. Suffers breathing difficulties, skeletal abnormalities, £150K needed for USA treatment. Please give what you can. Barclays Bank 20-55-13, A/C 40329703.

DOES UNCONDITIONAL LOVE truly exist? £20,000 urgently needed. All contributions greatly appreciated. Genuine – so if further information required contact Box 3665. Barclays 20-17-19, 10443824.

SICK OF WORKING for crap managers! Believe I could do so much better, unfortunately need £6,000 to complete Postgraduate Business course. Contributions gratefully received. Thanks. Midland 40-08-46, 41259334.

FINANCIALLY EMBARRASSED single parent in last year of degree – now facing homelessness. £15.000. Many thanx. Abbey National 09-01-26, 28887266.

GENUINE – desperate, abandoned, mum – 2 children. Needs £50,000 to avoid imminent eviction. Otherwise homeless Christmas time. Alliance & Leicester 72 60 02, 21439307.

CHRONIC DYSLEXIC 7 years. Failing and unhappy in state system. Desperately needs to attend specialist school. Fees £8000 / year. Please help us give her the chance to reach her potential. Thank you. Lloyds 30-94-63 Acc. No. 7160248 or Box 3765.

REDUCTIONIST NHS! frustrated health professionals study anthropology. Need financial support. Barclays 20-66-51, 40432598.

UNFORGIVABLE NAIVETÉ means lady desperately needs £2500. (Sainsburybank) 12-60-08, 07439240. Heartfelt thanks.

WOMAN WITH COURAGE and passion seeks financial support to make dream of running seminars in the wilderness happen. Natwest 60-24-19, 82525048, Box 3865 for more info or thanks.

PLEASE HELP. Grandma's home to be repossessed. £40,000 needed ASAP. Eternally grateful. Alliance & Leicester 726002, 51861708.

STRUGGLING WRITER needs £10,000 to complete novel. Please help. ABBEYNAT 09-01-26, 23587956.

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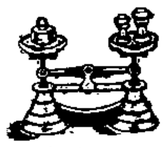

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+

a suspicion of

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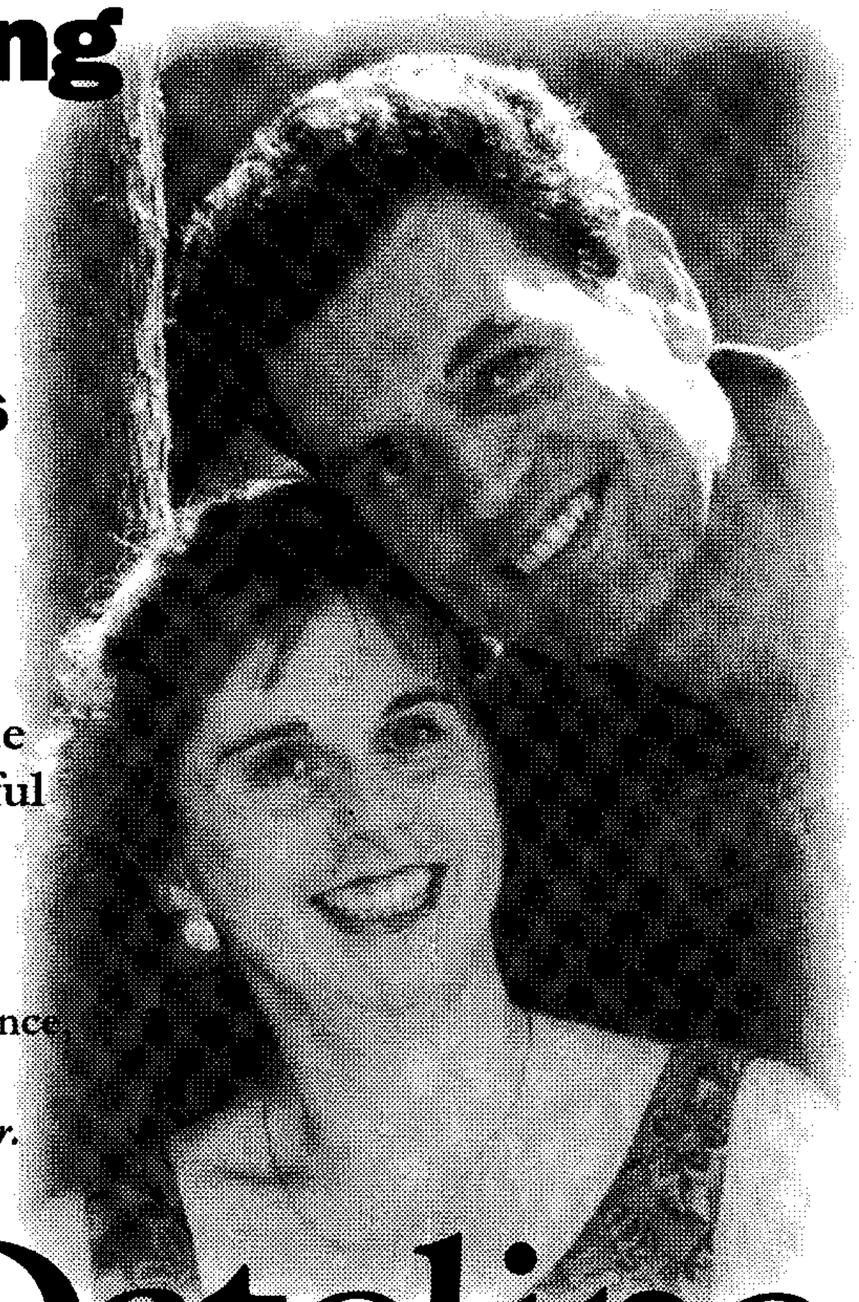

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Age

Height

Occupation

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Attractiveness

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Average ☐

Your Personality

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